Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs History Project

AMBASSADOR DAVID C. MILLER, JR.

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is January 6, 2003. This is an interview with David C. Miller, Jr. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Let's start at the beginning? Tell me when and where you were born and a little about your family.

MILLER: I was born July 15, 1942, in Cleveland, Ohio, and grew up in Cleveland, attended public schools. As I look back on how we got to this interview, it is largely due to my mother, which is true for most boys growing up. She was very interested in public service and thought I should have a healthy component of public service in my life.

Q: First let's start with your father. What was your father's background and education?

MILLER: The Millers are a bunch of refugees from France, French Huguenots who went to Bern, Switzerland, and then came to the United States and ultimately ended up in Peoria, Illinois. My grandfather was an electrical contractor and sent his son to Purdue to study electrical engineering. Then my dad taught at Purdue. When World War II started, he ended up at Wright Patterson Air Force Base for GE designing aircraft lighting for the war. My earliest memories of him were his coming home to Cleveland from Wright Patterson when he had time off to talk about cockpit lighting. He spent his whole career moving up the line of the lamp division. I'm a GE brat.

Q: What about your mother?

MILLER: Her family name was Brandenburg, which is a tip-off to the fact that they were German. The maternal names that were lost were Swedish? Swanson. In her mother's home in Iowa, Swedish was still spoken. The Swedes were stonemasons and got to Webster City, Iowa, because I think that's the first place they could find work-cutting stone. Her father, my grandfather, was a professor of psychology at Purdue. She went into psychology and was a child psychologist. So I was raised by a child psychologist, which is truly an unfair advantage if you're a child.

Q: Did your mother subscribe to any particular school?

MILLER: No. Her graduate work and her employment in the State of Iowa dealt with gifted children in the public school system who were not performing well academically. It's almost as difficult to be gifted as it is to be impaired in some ways. She spent a great deal of time before she got married working with youngsters with very high IQs, typically in the range of 160 to 170. Sadly, many were troubled and she failed to get them to perform up to their intellectual potential. One of her frustrations in life was to look back on the very, very bright students that she never got to college, never saw them get into the kind of life that they should have had if you believe that there is a correlation between an IQ test and success in life.

Q: I come out of the Foreign Service and I'm not sure if very high IQs and success in the Foreign Service have much correlation. In fact, it might be almost a negative correlation.

MILLER: Yes.

Q: That's true in most bureaucracies.

MILLER: I think that's correct. My guess is she would say an IQ between 135 and 140 is a good functioning IQ. You can do a lot with that but you're still a normal human being. At some point, you're running so fast or so far or in a parallel universe that you don't relate too well and it's almost luck of the draw whether you can harness that kind of IQ to a productive life.

Q: You lived in Cleveland when you were growing up, up through the mid-'50s. What was life like at home, the intellectual environment?

MILLER: The intellectual environment was really fun. I hope that's true for a lot of my colleagues. My dad missed teaching. He was forever trying to make me into somebody who was technically useful, who understood wiring, electricity, home electrical wiring, etc. I can assure you I know nothing. My dad bragged that he could tell the current in a wire by putting his fingers on it (carefully), which he learned from his grandfather. I'm a technical failure. Mom obviously spent a lot more time on psychology and who people are. I was an only child for about 12 years, so at the dinner table we were forever engaged in some kind of intellectual argument, which was frequently settled by getting up from the dinner table to try to find some reference book to say, "Wait a minute. I can't go on eating. I know that?" It was just great fun.

Q: Where did your family fall on the political spectrum?

MILLER: I suspect the best term would be "disengaged." Dad was very busy at GE. My mother was more interested in social issues and not parties. There is a theater in Cleveland that's devoted to what in the Fifties they would have described as Negro arts called Karamu House. I grew up in Cleveland Heights and then farther out in the suburbs in Cleveland. In those days, that was entirely white. My mother thought that was not correct. In third or fourth grade, she took me down to Karamu House to meet young black children (in today's terminology) who were engaged in the arts putting on plays. Thanks to her, from an early age I had a good sense that, amazingly enough, little black kids were a lot like little white kids. They might not live next door at that time, but she made a big point of saying, "Look, there are things the country needs to do. One of them is that we all need to know each other better."

Q: How about the Cold War? Did this impact your life?

MILLER: No, not really, other than from an intellectual standpoint. But not personally.

Q: You weren't ducked under a desk.

MILLER: You learned to duck under a desk. I never took it very seriously. I figured if there was an attack a desk was not going to do me a lot of good. It did give you a little time off however, so you could joke with your neighbor under the desk. I don't think we ever built a bomb shelter.

Q: How about reading? Did you find any books particularly interesting?

MILLER: It's a type of book. Grandmother Brandenburg, after her husband died, worked in a bookstore in West Lafayette, so I was bombarded by books from Grandmother and fairly much bombarded with books from Mother. The books that meant the most to me were biographies or autobiographies of people in public life. For reasons known only to geneticists, these books appealed to me from a very early age. Something in my head resonated in terms of public service. To this day, I find myself intrigued by how individuals have wrestled with managing government relations, trying to define the public good, or resolve international conflict. Even as a kid, I remember reading about Bismarck and reading about all the various PMs of Great Britain and trying to figure out how people made society work.

Q: In elementary school, any teachers that stick out?

MILLER: Yes, I had a fifth grade teacher who was just terrific. Her husband was a professor at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. She taught fifth grade. Every summer they went to Colorado and worked on environmental issues. I thought I was perfectly old enough to go to Colorado and work with the college students from Case that were going out there to work on stuff. My parents had to convince me that a fifth grader should not be trundling off with college students from Case to work on issues in Colorado. The good news in that is that we had a very small piece of property outside of Cleveland in Chardon, Ohio, that we loosely called "The Farm," which was by no means a farm. It was really just a few acres of trees. From a very young age, I was able to work in the woods, which I like a lot. That was a poor substitute for going to Colorado. I am still annoyed. There I was, in fifth grade, ready to go out and work in the Rockies and I couldn't go.

Q: And they probably could have used you very nicely. There's nothing like a child carrying stuff?

MILLER: I thought that would have been fun. Those teachers do make a difference. I went all the way though the public school system, first in Cleveland Heights. Then after ninth grade, my family moved out to Moreland Hills, and into the Orange school system. I went to Orange High School, a very small (122 kids in our graduating class) school.

Q: In high school, what subjects turned you on? Were there any extracurricular activities?

MILLER: As happens in many public high schools, the courses that turn you on are the courses taught by teachers of competence more than the subject matter. As you get further along in education, you get more toward picking a subject matter and then finding a teacher. Staggeringly enough, in high school I found myself doing all the advanced placement math and science stuff, which is of absolutely no use to me today, and frankly, something at which I was not terribly good. But there was a great teacher, and that was what counted to me at the time.

From a sports standpoint, I loved running the 440. If I could, I still would love to run the 440. It's a great race. I was part of the conference winning medley relay team for the high school and made it to the citywide track meets, the top six in the City of Cleveland, Ohio, only to be faced with a man named Paul Warfield who was also lining up on the starting line that day and all I ever saw was Paul Warfield's back. He went on to have a fine NFL career with the Cleveland Browns and I went on to do what I should have done, which is not run competitively. Then I was president of my class. My wife now, Mollie Miller, was secretary of the class. We lived on the same street, so Mollie and I go back to 1957?47 years ago. That is fun. But the event in high school that did more than anything to shape my life was an American Field Service scholarship to Takamatsu, Japan. I did not speak much Japanese, nor did many other high school students at that time. So, I attended a couple months of a school year in Japan, followed by the summer vacation period, living with a Japanese family. I was one of only two Americans living in Takamatsu. That was 1957. My "Japanese father" had been a doctor in the Japanese Army, taking part in the invasion of China.

Q: How did you find Japan?

MILLER: The American Field Service picked me as a student. I first thought I was going to go to New Zealand for school. Then I got something in the mail saying, "No, you've been swapped to go to Takamatsu, Japan." Off we went on a leftover Japanese freighter and landed in Yokohama. I was 16 and went to high school in Takamatsu.

Q: Did you find Japan fun?

MILLER: Oh, yes. The most fun thing about Japan was that I realized after an initial period of terror that I could really live on my own, that I loved it, that I loved representing the United States as best you do when you're very young. I immensely enjoyed talking to foreigners, meeting with foreigners, meeting another culture. I suspect a lot of Foreign Service officers feel the same way.

Q: Yes. Did the bug insert itself into your system?

MILLER: Yes, I think that's where I really got infected. If one can ever figure out where the original "parasite" came from, I think it began in Takamatsu.

Q: Was there a GE culture?

MILLER: Sure. GE was and is the finest global engineering company. In those days, it was terribly proud of its technical competence, more so than it is today, as it has grown into so many non-technical business areas. It's a slightly different culture. It was anti-union. I remember long discussions with my dad on that issue, discussing the merits of various unions in GE. I was in high school when we went through the gigantic power generation anti-trust/price fixing activities against GE when a number of GE executives went to jail. That was a relatively shattering experience for my father, who felt that the company had dealt unfairly with those who were convicted. But it was watching my dad behave at GE that set many of the values in my life.

Q: During this period was the time of the organization man. This would be the culture your father would have come out of, wasn't it?

MILLER: Absolutely.

Q: Which was dedication to the company.

MILLER: Absolutely. We lived in an era of that social contract. The company car came to pick up Dad. Dad was an upper-middle level executive at GE. He knew he would work for GE all his life. As it turned out, my mother passed away in middle of his career. Another GE executive with whom he had worked had previously been killed in a company car accident. He married this widow. So, not only did my dad grow up in the GE culture, my stepmother's husband grew up in GE. It was a GE family.

Q: While you were in high school, was it the thought that they were training GE executives there? Did you feel you were on the GE track?

MILLER: No, I ended up working for Westinghouse, which was quite bizarre and probably more Freudian than anything. My mother really wanted me to go teach, as her dad had and as her husband had before the war started. Once again, I didn't really achieve one of Mom's objectives.

Q: When you were ready to go to college, it was 1960?

MILLER: Yes.

Q: Was Purdue high on your list?

MILLER: Like many families, wandering through the college selection process ought to be the subject of a novel. My mom had gone to DePauw. Her sister had gone to Oberlin. My uncle had also gone to Oberlin. And of course, Dad had gone to Purdue, and Grandfather Brandenburg had taught there. There was a long tradition of smaller or midwestern schools. I went to look at all of them. But then a Princeton alumni who lived down the street said, "You ought to go to Princeton." Given a growing interest in public service this made sense to me. I looked at Princeton and thought Princeton was a little too prep schoolish. It felt a little narrow. So I went up to New Haven and looked at Yale. Most kids from Cleveland who have the opportunity go to Yale. I didn't like New Haven and decided that I would do better to go to a school that was different than I was. I was much more in the class president/competitive athlete mold. I wanted to be challenged. I ended up going to Harvard. That was a great decision. I enjoyed those years. I was elected to the alumni board for a period of time.

Q: You were at Harvard from when to when?

MILLER: '60 to '64.

Q: First things first. Did the election of 1960 with John F. Kennedy-

MILLER: Big time. All of the undergrads at Harvard were very impressed (probably overly-impressed) that one of them had become President.

Q: How did this hit you?

MILLER: Huge. It was great. Arthur Schlesinger's kid was a classmate and a seminar mate. We followed the Cuban Missile Crisis by Stevie Schlesinger getting calls from his dad saying, "Things don't look so good." Jack and Bob Kennedy had belonged to the same club as I joined and so we felt a tremendous tie.

Q: Did the activism of "What can you do for your country?" hit your class and you personally?

MILLER: Oh, yes. I think it hit the class and it certainly hit me, although my mother had filled me full of this spirit since the age of two. While at school I spent a great deal of time at Phillips Brooks House, which is a social service organization at Harvard, and ultimately ran the prison teaching program at Brooks House and then was the Treasurer of Brooks House my senior year. I spent a lot of time on that.

Q: What were you concentrating on?

MILLER: I was concentrating in government for half a year until I decided that I read government stuff when I got up in the morning and I ought to take a major that was something that had to be taught to me rather than what I wanted to read. I shifted to economics, a good decision, and tried to get into as much of the rigorous side of economics as I could.

Q: Was the major textbook at the time Samuelson?

MILLER: The major textbook since the ice melted was Samuelson. I was in a number of seminars and got to meet Samuelson and work with Samuelson, a fine guy. He should have had tenure at Harvard, did not get it, and was always bitter about that.

Q: Why not?

MILLER: The rumor is that he was Jewish and that that played a role in that. Frankly, I haven't a clue if Mr. Samuelson is Jewish or if it played a role in it. But for me, the economics faculty at Harvard at that point was very good and ran all the way from really sophisticated gaming theory through John Kenneth Galbraith economic/social theory.

Q: Did you find yourself in the economics field comfortable in any particular area?

MILLER: Yes. I liked microeconomics and the juxtaposition of psychology and microeconomics? what makes the economic animal behave? and what motivates people and how this economy put those two together. That was not in great fashion when I was at Harvard. It became much more in vogue in the last 10-15 years.

Q: This is where Nobel Prizes are awarded now. But in those days it was more numbers.

MILLER: Absolutely. To find good micro-economists you really had to bang away on it. It ended up that I wrote a thesis under Arthur Smithies. That turned out to be terribly important. I went to Vietnam working under the direction of Arthur. But Arthur was a macro-economist and I was a micro, so I was doing a thesis on the relative merits or lack thereof of cost plus contracting in major weapons systems procurement, what motivated the companies to behave the way they did. I always thought that was fun. I still love it now.

Q: Let's talk about life at Harvard. Did you find this a diverse community?

MILLER: Oh, yes, wonderful. Harvard was exactly what I wanted it to be. Orange High School had 122 graduating students. If you rounded it up to 13, I made the top 10 percent. For me to go to Harvard on a scholarship and find a class that is half from Andover, Exeter, Groton, St. Mark's, St. Paul's, and so forth was staggering. I had an advantage in that there was a student from the American Field Service, George Draper, who was my roommate and sort of my mentor at Harvard. His family had gone to Harvard for a long time. His uncle did a lot of the famous Kennedy portraits. It was a lovely family and they took me under their wing without which I probably would have felt a little more lost in the first year.

Q: Somebody who went to Harvard was saying that the first 2 years the prep school boys really outshone the high school graduates but they came in second place by the end.

MILLER: Clearly they came in better prepared. If you graduated from Andover and you weren't better prepared than somebody who graduated from Orange High School, your family wasted an immense amount of money. What happens at Harvard is that everybody who gets into Harvard will graduate from Harvard. There isn't any problem with that. The question is simply how truly intellectually competent you are and how much you want to work. I had a summa cum laude roommate who has been teaching astronomy out at Berkeley forever. He went to Andover and was really bright and worked really hard and he's just smart as all get out. So, I love the environment. I think it was a great choice.

Q: Was there much intellectual discussion?

MILLER: Harvard wouldn't know what to do if there were no intellectual discussion. You couldn't go to a movie without having an intellectual discussion. That's the downside of Harvard that it can occasionally produce very strange people who never get over the fact that they went to Harvard and really have a hard time relating to people in any normal discourse.

Q: What about the impact of the civil rights movement? How did this hit you?

MILLER: A lot. I did a lot in the civil rights movement. At Harvard, I didn't do much. I spent some time in the summers working in inner city Cleveland, in the Huff area, doing very rudimentary stuff - building containers for trash. During law school, I got very heavily involved in the civil rights movement. But at Harvard, I was just more concerned about international affairs in general than in those domestic issues. During law school it became a huge issue for me. During the summer after my second year in law school I moved to Bedford-Stuyvesant and founded the Cornerstone Project with a law school friend, Lou Ferrand.

Q: During the early '60s is when America's discovery of Africa came about. Soapie Williams and the coming of independence of a series of countries. It got quite exciting. Did that hit you at all?

MILLER: No, Africa never. That continent where I ended up spending a decade had not hit me at all. In fact, no particular continent did.

Q: Did Vietnam come up at all?

MILLER: No, which is also interesting.

Q: The draft was still in force, but was this a driving thing at all?

MILLER: No.

Q: It was just sort of there.

MILLER: Yes, it was just sort of there. I don't know why it didn't come up. I mean, the only thing I can remember is, I applied to only one law school. My mother had died my junior year. I knew I had to be close to home, so I applied to Michigan. My housemaster sat down with me one day and said, "You know, it's conceivable that you could be rejected." I said, "Sir, really?" He said, "Yes. If you do, you're going to be drafted and you're going to end up going to Vietnam." I sort of said, "Oh, okay." It didn't loom large. I entered Michigan Law School.

Q: You were talking about Philips Brooks House. What sort of work were you doing there?

MILLER: Philips Brooks House is the largest undergraduate institution at Harvard. It typically has about one out of every four Harvard students involved in it. It is entirely devoted to social service. There is a mental health program, a prison teaching program, a community development program. When I was there we launched a program to start teaching in Tanganyika. Little did I know I would end up going to Tanzania later on. I got intrigued with teaching inmates. I had spent freshman, sophomore, and junior year teaching at the various prisons. Then my junior year I was the head of that program. We must have had approximately 100 students going out to teach at the different prisons, all range of courses, once a week.

Q: What was your impression when you started getting involved with the prison inmates?

MILLER: My enthusiasm for the work reflected one of my basic faults? I can look at a glass that has an eighth of an inch of water in it and see it half full. I have always believed that there is a possibility for a great deal more water in the glass if you simply take the time and try. The most direct challenge I could find were those who had already lost and were incarcerated. To sit there and look at that theory and sort of say to myself, "Who are these people? What are they doing there? How bright are they? What are they interested in talking about? What might you do to help them land on their feet after they left?" I basically concluded that if I had to develop a bell curve of the inmate population at a men's maximum security, probably 20% of them were bright enough they should have done well in life. Probably 30% of them were bright enough that they could have survived had they chosen to work at McDonald's and flip hamburgers in today's world. And probably half of them were sufficiently scarred psychologically or with sufficient intellectual incompetence that life was very difficult and crime or prison or some kind of supervised life was going to be in their future one way or another.

Q: How did you find putting the Harvard kids, who had come from intellectual environments, and you put them up against this?? How did this work?

MILLER: I think pretty well. Very typically people would end up teaching courses in prison that reflected what they were studying in school. There were no physical security problems ever that I was aware of. We taught in a combination prison/mental facility. We always were very carefully supervised there because there were some very strange people in that institution. That said, they were also very bright, so it was fun to teach them. But we liked it. Mainly guys. Some girls from Radcliff taught, but mainly kids from Harvard. At that point, we had two separate schools.

Q: But the courses were integrated at that time?

MILLER: Yes, but we still had Radcliff and Harvard. You never wanted to get into a section where there were a lot of Radcliff girls because they were inevitably smarter. If you walked into a section at 10:00 AM and there were 12 girls from Radcliff and three guys from Harvard, the key was to get out of that section before you were nailed to the wall. They're bright. They are really bright.

Q: You mentioned that your significant other was in your high school. What happened there?

MILLER: She went to the University of Arizona. I didn't see her again until the first year of law school, which is the most important thing that the civil rights movement did for me. The most important thing is that I came down from Michigan to Washington - she was already herfor a civil rights meeting. I took her out to dinner and we got married. I think we fell in love the first evening.

Q: Michigan. Law schools all have their own persona. What was law school at Michigan like?

MILLER: Really dull. It was the best law school in a couple hours drive of home. That was very important. My dad had not remarried and I had a younger brother and a younger sister and we were trying to rebuild the family after Mother's death. That was that. Michigan is an excellent law school, was then, and is today. But it's very much a trade school. It is not like Yale. It doesn't teach grand ideas. It teaches you how to draft wills and merge corporations and follow title and get people off of criminal charges and so on. I got completely wrapped up in the civil rights movement during law school and as one of my professors finally said, "If you really attended, you might have done better." I said, "Well, there you are."

Q: Law is a particular thing. So many people who later get involved in government go to law but often don't really practice. Is this just an entree?

MILLER: No, it teaches you how to think. One of the things about different disciplines is that every discipline gives a matrix through which you see the world. That's true for mathematics, for economics or physics, and of course, for the law. Law gives you a matrix through which you view how events in the world occur and how to evaluate them. A legal framework, if you're interested in public policy is a good, useful framework. It is not the only one, but I think that law is a discipline that has captured the efforts of man to deal with conflict and the resolution of issues in a structured manner. If you go back to its roots, the first time there were enough people that you had to codify how they behaved with each other, you began to develop law. That's why it's useful to understand it. That said, about 60% of what happened in law school was just dull, awful stuff. I recommend it to people because if you think you're well educated when you get to law school, you've got another thought coming. It's three more years of an immense amount of reading and writing.

Q: That's why I recommend military service for a little while. A horrible way to do it, but afterwards you get an impression of at least how a major branch of government operates.

MILLER: You got it.

Q: Let's talk about civil rights. You were there from '64 to '67.

MILLER: That's right.

Q: What were you doing civil rights-wise?

MILLER: Here is what we were doing, which was really fun. At college, I had been active in lots of different things, but the Republican Party organization had been something I had worked with on and off. I got to Michigan and there was a college Republican organization. It included the graduate schools and the college. I got active in that.

Q: Was this the Ripon Society?

MILLER: No. I was in the Ripon Society and knew a lot of guys who were in the Ripon Society, but this was just regular college stuff and the Young Republican activities. At that time, George Romney was the governor of Michigan, a Republican business leader? and a presidential aspirant whom I briefed in Saigon in later life.

Q: You didn't brainwash him, I hope. We'll come to that. This is a pivotal thing in his political career.

MILLER: You bet. We'll come to that.

During my first year, it occurred to me that the people I was meeting in both the college Republicans and the Young Republicans had a very limited grasp of what African-Americans went through in the United States. This was a real failing for the Party. At that point the Party still had national leaders like Jacob Javits, John Lindsay, and Nelson Rockefeller.

Q: This was a very solid liberal lean.

MILLER: So, during my first year we ran a very large conference that Governor Romney sponsored. We reached out to primarily the Southern Christian Leadership Conference leadership, Hosea Williams and some of these guys. They came up to Ann Arbor and we had a very successful two-or-three day, multiple state YR/CR civil rights sponsored by Romney. Who was Hosea Williams? What is the Southern Christian Leadership Conference? What is going on? How does the Party like it? At the end of that, I was just convinced that whatever party you were in our young political leadership was clueless in terms of what the civil rights movement was about.

Then a very important thing happened to me. At the end of my first year of law school, a guy named Joe McMahon, who was the head of the YR activity at Michigan, had already spent a summer working for John Doar, who was heading the Civil Rights Division at the Justice Department.

Q: He was very famous in the confrontations down in Mississippi and Alabama.

MILLER: Absolutely, and a Republican by political affliction, but the Attorney General, Bob Kennedy hired him, much to Bob Kennedy's credit. So, I applied to work in the Civil Rights Division after the first year of law school, which was just not done. First year students just didn't have enough training. I got a letter rejecting me with hardly a second thought, I suspect. I went to see Joe and he said, "This is wrong. You've got to work in the Civil Rights Division." He called Mr. Doar. I was sitting in his room. He said, "Mr. Doar, you have got to hire Dave Miller." And he did. That was very important. This was the summer of 1965. I got to come down here to Washington and work in the Southeast Division of the Civil Rights Division. I worked in Albany, Americus, and Bainbridge, Georgia, as well as in the school suit in Jefferson County, which is Birmingham, Alabama. And I was in Americus, Georgia, when a demonstrator was shot and killed.

That meant a lot to me. That was the first time I had been in the South.

I went back to start my second year of law school and was working with a great guy named Lou Ferrand, who was also involved in campus Republican activities. We came up with an idea that we ought to take a pre-selected group of young Americans who were interested in political leadership and expose them to inner city America. We came up with a concept of taking summer congressional interns, who were in essence a self-selected group who care about politics, and find some way to get them an experience as close as we could to what it's like to be black in America. After a lot of conversations, Governor Romney called the mayor of New York, John Lindsay. This got us to the Hill, working with then Congressman Gerry Ford and Congressman Mel Laird and all the Congressional leadership. Lou and I started something called the Cornerstone Project. The project moved into an abandoned brownstone at 242 Clifton Place in Bedford-Stuyvesant, New York.

Q: This was the center of the ghetto?

MILLER: You got it. Our work was bizarre, so unusual, that it ended up on NBC News at the end of the summer. We basically took an abandoned brownstone, fixed it up, put in plumbing, got the permission from the Republican leadership in the House to bring up a group of 20 interns every two weeks to work with then Brooklyn Core or Youth in Action, which was the anti-poverty umbrella organization in Bed-Stuy. The Cornerstone Baptist Church in Bedford-Stuyvesant is where the name of the project came from. The first summer we had about 100 kids in the program, spent about $20,000, which we raised from one and all, including (all) of my newly married wife's savings. We had a wonderful time. Nobody got hurt. We had kids walking around Bed-Stuy in the middle of the night because the neighborhood knew that we were okay. That was really fun.

It was such a hit that eventually it spread to Cleveland and Boston. We went down to Atlanta and then did an outreach from Atlanta to Selma, Alabama. Then the Federal government took it over as a training program. I went to Vietnam.

Q: You're talking about being in Ann Arbor and yet you're not too far from Detroit, which was a center of blackness.

Q: Was there a reason for this? Was it too northern?

MILLER: No. It was because we needed the active support of the city elected leadership. John Lindsay and a bunch of his people, a guy named Jay Kriegel, John Pryce, and Sid Gardner were all around John Lindsay and I got to know them and they said, "This is a great idea. Lindsay will make this happen." So, we had the active support and the blessings of the mayor and that was very important. I can't remember precisely why Detroit seemed less exciting. It surely would have been cheaper. But we ended up with Mayor Lindsay. If you're going to take kids to a ghetto, you can take them to Harlem or Bed-Stuy. I guess our thought was, if you're going to do it, do it big time. So we sort of did it. We actually went up and looked at Harlem and then we finally concluded that Bed-Stuy was an easier place to work.

Q: Did you have any feel of your group fighting for the soul of the Republican Party?

MILLER: Absolutely.

Q: How did you see the Republican Party?

MILLER: I was raised Republican and am still a Republican. But as Julius Nyerere said to me on any number of occasions, "How can you be a Republican?" But I still believe, even in today's context, that there are many fundamental principles of the Party that are terribly relevant to the long-run success of all American individuals, including those of color. But basically, those who think, and who have lived like me, lost the struggle for the soul of the Party. There are very few people like me left in the Party. If so, they're being crushed resolutely. But we clearly were looking at some important things that happened over time. We were trying to learn from the IBM plant in Bedford-Stuyvesant. We were trying to prove to blacks that they would be judged on their merits and not on the color of their skin and if they wanted to succeed they could do it. Ultimately I ended up (briefly) on the Board of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration and Development Corporation.

Q: As you were moving through Michigan, getting ready to get out in '67, did you know what you were pointed towards?

MILLER: Sometime or other, probably getting near the end of the second year, the war in Vietnam was getting to be bigger and bigger. I reached two or three fundamental conclusions. One was that it was dumb and mismanaged and was something I was not very enthusiastic about. That said, I had a strong sense that my country was at war and that I ought to try to do something to help. I didn't think that leaving the country was terribly helpful. Yet by the time I knew I wanted to get to Vietnam, I was convinced that killing more Vietnamese was in all probability not going to be of great use to anybody. By that time, I was married. Mollie and I got married that summer after my second year. We were expecting a child. Under the Selective Service rules of the time, I didn't have to go to Vietnam, but I wanted to go to Vietnam, so I started looking around for how to help. As fate would have it, I ultimately found out that Arthur Smithies, with whom I had worked on my college thesis and from whom I had taken courses, was going to Vietnam with a very odd little group of people, a company called Simulmatics. The gang at Simulmatics included Pat Moynihan, Ithiel de Sola Poole, Adam Yarmolinsky?and a lot of Cambridge intellectual talent, that came together to work for the Advanced Research Projects Agency at the Pentagon.

Q: Was this one of McNamara's grandchildren?

MILLER: Yes. In the ARPA compound, which was on the river very close to District 10 in Saigon, we had a remarkable collection of intellectual talent of which I was a pretty small foot soldier. There were a lot of professors. So, what happened was that virtually within a week or two of graduating from law school, I got on a plane and went over to work with Simulmatics and Arthur Smithies. We were tasked with determining (as best you could) what was happening to the economy in the middle of this war and was there a way to make the economy work in our favor. That broke down into two accounts. Having the economy work in your favor in the short run is, put directly, what intelligence can you glean from what's happening in the economy? Secondly, what works for you in the long run is, for example, the Strategic Hamlet Program of basically pulling loosely aggregated country residents into a defendable single village depended largely on the ability to make an economy run around that. It's cute to get everybody into the compound at night, but if you can't keep an economy functioning around the Strategic Hamlet it will fail. So, I launched off to Vietnam to try to do those two things.

Q: This was in the summer of '67?

MILLER: Yes. I basically stayed there through the spring of '68 and then came back to participate in the White House Fellows program. We got to spend a lot of time in the countryside. Vietnam is a long story.

Q: Vietnam is so pivotal. What was your impression of Vietnam?

MILLER: It was probably worse than I anticipated, but in keeping with the half-full glass of water thing, I went with enthusiasm and tried to figure out. There were two ways I looked at it primarily. One was IV Corps, which would have been the heart of the agricultural activity.

Q: This was down in the Mekong?

MILLER: Yes, this was down Route 4 from Saigon through the towns of My Tho, Can Tho, and Soc Trang down into the Delta, and then the areas south of the Da Nang Airfield, which was down Route 1. The northern area was primarily faced with this simple problem. What could conceivably be accomplished in an area of really severe conflict? The work in IV Corps, in the Delta, was much more normal. Life in the Delta for the Chinese rice mill owner and the rice grower was pretty normal, and of course, they were a fountain of information on what was really happening in the countryside. I just spent a lot of the week running around in the field. I would return to Saigon on the weekends.

And now to tell you a story that is really wonderful, and illustrates the crazy things that happened during the conflict. The Advanced Research Projects Agency, which was responsible for me in country, was being run by General Hap Arnold's son, a colonel in the Air Force. After the first two months, my wife was coming over from the States to visit me in Singapore, from which she planned to proceed to Indonesia, where she would use her skills to teach English. Our first pregnancy had ended in a miscarriage, so it was not a very happy time. But she was coming over to Singapore to meet me. So, I went to Colonel Arnold and said, "This weekend I would like your permission to go down to Singapore to see my wife." He said, "Well, what's she going to do?" I said, "She's a linguist. She's been studying Indonesian and she's going to teach." He said, "Well, have her come to Vietnam." I said, "How can I have her come to Vietnam?" He said, "Well, we just won't tell anybody, will we?" I said, "You've got to be kidding me." He was a colonel. He said, "Well, my wife was with me in Korea. I think a family that's together in an effort like this is a good thing." That's what he wanted to do. He said, "She could teach at the Vietnamese-American Association. She could teach English as a second language." I got down to Singapore as quick as I could. When we met, I told he"You're not going to go to Indonesia, you can come with me to Vietnam." She said, "You're crazy," but she ended up in Vietnam for three or four months, basically up to the Tet offensive. But that was really bizarre. These wonderful stories from your lifetime. Peter Kahn, now the publisher of "The Wall Street Journal" and a Pulitzer Prize winner, and I had been club mates at Harvard. Peter was in Saigon at the same time. So, when Mollie arrived I decided I would introduce her to my friends in the press corps. We went out to dinner and I said, "This is my wife, Mollie," which was greeted by loud snickers and sort of, "But she can't be your wife! How did you get this babe?" I said, "No, no, she really is my wife." That's another whole long, humorous story. She was a great partner there. Was a fine teacher of English, but suffered as we all did, from the human damage occurring around her. On a serious note, I concluded two or three things in Vietnam. One is that the war was not winnable because the premises on which we entered were not sustainable. The analytic work that was done thereafter was warped to support the premises. My worst illustration of this involves General Lansdale, of Philippines insurrection fame. I came back from IV Corps on one particular trip, and was so enthused about my observations, that it was arranged for me to meet General Lansdale in Saigon to brief him.

Q: He was a very famous General. Those best-known anti-guerilla leaders our country had produced.

MILLER: So, I met with Ed Lansdale and had a lot of observations about the hamlet evaluation system and the measures of our performance in the districts and so on. General Lansdale said, "Well, you know, young man, we've already lost this war." I said, "Gee, Sir, there are a lot of people here in country that are still fighting." He said, "Yes, but what we're doing is so nonsensical that there's no way we're going to win. It's just a question of how long it will be before we can leave." I was stunned. With that, I developed a lifelong interest in accurate intelligence and some devotion to telling the truth that proved to be very critical in my public life.

Q: We're talking about particularly the Hamlet Evaluation System, which was each person assigned to an area, an American, had to come up with positive figures.

MILLER: The basic problem with the system was the "warping of the truth" as it moved up the chain of command. If the hamlet didn't look good, then the district didn't look good, then the province didn't look good, then the Corps didn't look good, and then in Saigon, some senior general didn't look good. That was not acceptable. So each layer tended to make things just a little more favorable, until Saigon had a completely unrealistic picture of what was happening in the field.

Q: Yes.

MILLER: Most of the guys knew that they were warping the system a bit. Nobody would ever say they were lying about things. My favorite in the Delta involved the questions that we had on the HES form related largely to road transportation. In the Delta, you clearly had an option between water and road transportation. Frequently, water transportation was the more useful. So, you'd get to one of our little outposts and there would be Major Jones and his district team and we'd start talking to Jones about what was going on. Jones would say, "These are all Bs." We would say, "Why is that?" "Well, we control 90% of the roads." We'd say, "That is great, Sir. How much commerce is moving on the roads?" "Well, actually, none." "Well, why is that?" "We'll, they've got land mines and ambushes." I'd say, "Where is all the commerce going?" "Well, it's all in the canals." "And who controls that?" "Well, we don't." I said, "Oh, well, don't you think to give a sense of what's happening you might want to answer these questions a little differently?" He would reply that the question only asked about the roads. And the guy would look at you like you were dreaming. So, you ultimately came to the conclusion that you should really try very hard to get accurate data to policymakers. I don't think you should hold policymakers to rationality all the time, but those of us who are in public activity or living overseas really do owe our country our best efforts to try to decide what is true and what is not. The other thing that came out of my time in Vietnam was that war impressed me as a terrible activity. It happens. It's a terrible thing. The idea that it's a glamorous and fun pastime is just as close to insanity as anything you can imagine. That helped motivate and reinforce this idea that diplomatic work was a good thing.

Q: You're talking about the military reporting, which was essentially the hamlet evaluation and all this, which you remarked was extremely flawed. It was one of these bean-counting exercises. Did you get any feel for what the embassy was getting from its Foreign Service officers and the CIA was getting?

MILLER: Not as much. I had very little contact with FSOs. I had more contact with Agency people. I think that we were just on the cusp of the Agency giving up on trying to report honestly. I'd have to go back through the history there of the inability of the Agency to sustain its DI [the analytic function] function as an honest provider of data. There were so many careers that went up in smoke when they tried to tell people that things were not as Washington thought that sometime in '65/'66/'67, the Agency gave up on trying to tell people the truth. Nobody wanted to hear the truth. The operational side of the Agency, the Phoenix Program, the SOG [Studies and Operations Group, the covert action program in Vietnam] activities, took preeminence and the ability of good analysts to come back and say, "We're losing the war. We don't know what we're doing" disappeared.

Q: In your group of intellectuals under military control, what was the spirit?

MILLER: Like MASH, the TV series in which the characters survived by developing a whole range of rather outlandish "defense mechanisms."

Q: A popular TV program.

MILLER: You developed a bizarre sense of humor to deal with this. We drank. One of our guys got on his motorcycle to Cambodia, returning with what he assured us was the best marijuana in all of Southeast Asia. For those who used marijuana this was truly a great accomplishment. When you got assignments from Washington like "We need an analytic model to validate the body count," reporting, that took a couple weeks worth of drinking beer late into the evening to say "If you saw 50 left feet in a rice paddy at 4:00 PM in an engagement in which we had expended 1,000 rounds, how many bodies would there be in the rice paddy?" The answer is, nobody had a clue. One way to validate the body count would be to send out Lance Corporal Jones at dusk to try to do an accurate body count. The problem is that Jones would usually get killed. So, it was better to dummy the system than to lose Lance Corporal Jones. That we knew. So, what was it like? I still have very good friends with whom I worked over there. Like all of these experiences, they last a long time. It left me convinced we were going to lose and it left me with a set of objectives for my life in terms of trying to not let things like that happen again.

Q: Did you have any feel that we were on the wrong track? Was there a right track?

MILLER: There might have been a right track, which in hindsight is much easier to discuss. The right tracks go all the way back to Ho Chi Minh, who came to us and he didn't like the French. The first response to that is, if Vietnam had existed in a vacuum and we had been able to tell the French to forget it as allies and we weren't concerned about anyplace else in the world, we might have been able to reach out to Ho Chi Minh at that time and say, "We don't like colonies or empires either." But then obviously if you took France in the global context?

Q: We were concerned about keeping France in NATO.

MILLER: Yes. We had big issues with France and Ho Chi Minh wasn't one of them. So, you sort of missed that opportunity. Then you get into the Dien Bien Phu aftermath. Did we do the right thing? Should we have stepped in militarily or should we have encouraged a sincere effort to bring an end to the civil war. Enough is enough. These are dedicated folks so let's press for a political solution. Then you could have moved onto, let's have a "light" engagement. Let's use Special Forces troops. Let's find a viable political structure. In one of the great examples of mission creep, we went from a handful of advisors to 500,000 kids or whatever. That was insane. The problem was, there was no ability to say, "Here is the game-plan. If it doesn't work, we're going to figure out how to go home now." You need to have thought out how you went home. The problem is, we had no exit strategy once we were in that far, which makes you think of today's Middle East problem. But we got in far enough that there simply was no apparent way to back out.

Q: You were there during Tet?

MILLER: Yes.

Q: Could you tell me your experiences during Tet?

MILLER: It was one of those days that altered your life. By that time, we were sleeping with small arms in the house.

Q: Where were you located?

MILLER: On the morning of Tet, I was asleep in a bed on the road between Tan San Nhut airport and downtown, relatively closer to the embassy and the center of the city.

The good news is that we had laid in some extra food, as over the holidays, the Vietnamese house staff was not going to be there. We were awakened by very low flying helicopters over the house, much lower than usual on their approaches to Tan San Nhut. So we woke up. It was maybe 7:00 AM. We said, "Well, we're awake. We're going to drive downtown and have breakfast." So, three or four of us got into a car, a small Toyota, and we started driving downtown. We had gone four or five blocks and there was a dead VC in the street, shot in front of somebody's wall." We said, "Somebody got into town last night. That's amazing." We drove on a little bit farther toward the downtown and we ran into a couple more bodies. But this being Vietnam, we just kept on, as we were used to seeing this in the countryside. We get downtown and we were going to one of the officers' messes, probably the Brinks, which was four or five blocks from the embassy. We parked the car. When we got out we noticed everybody had sidearm on. People were carrying weapons. This was like 8:00 AM on Sunday or something. We looked at this one trooper and said, "What's going on?" He said, "They've captured the embassy." We said, "Ah, come on. Don't give us that crap. It's Sunday. We want ham an eggs." He said, "No, they've captured the embassy. See those helicopters going in there? We're in the process of recapturing the embassy." Well, that was the first we had a sense that there was something really bad going on. We skipped breakfast and turned around and went back to our little villa.

Over time, we took an extra fridge, filled it full of sand, got that in front of our door. We had a grease gun with 20 rounds of 45-caliber ammunition which would have been absolutely useless. We went up to the roof and sat there with as much as beer and canned ham as we could find for two days and we watched close air support in Saigon. Then about the third day one of our friends from the embassy arrived and said, "You've got to go get your Vietnamese and you've got to get out on the street." We had a number of Americans who were fluent in Chinese and Vietnamese, which I was not, and probably 20 good Vietnamese interpreters. This fellow arrived and said, "You've got to drive around town, find these people, and we want you to start in District 10." District 10 was the Chinese area where we had completely lost control of the situation to what turned out to be regular NVA units. So, we got in our little car, having been armed with a short barrel .38, and drove around Saigon, picked up our folks, and off we went. I spent the balance of my time in Vietnam interviewing people trying to figure out what had happened, what these troops looked like when they came into town, who fought well on our side, who did not. Then I went back through all the districts we had worked in to look at the economic impact of the attack, how people perceived what had happened.

Q: By the time you left there, was it the summer of '68?

MILLER: It was in the spring.

Q: What was your impression of the economy at that time?

MILLER: Actually, like many economies in wartime, I thought it was doing better than anyone had a right to expect. And that was particularly true of agricultural activities. More complex light manufacturing and so on was harder but we spent a lot of time with Chinese rice mill owners in the Delta, in IV Corps, interviewing them about the availability of insecticides, fertilizers, the prices of rice, how far they'd get boats out to collect rice, how far they would advance finance crops, which was a great intelligence data for us. If God has ever made a natural intelligence organization, it's a Great Overseas Chinese community. They know all. One of my partners was a Mormon who had done his missionary work in Hong Kong. He spoke reasonable Cantonese. We had an opportunity to talk to a lot of people and we concluded that the economy actually was working fairly well and that the supplements that AID was providing, the insecticides, were getting out and were maintaining a fairly healthy rice production base.

Q: Had the miracle rice appeared yet?

MILLER: I don't believe so. I don't remember any questions on that subject.

Q: When you left there in '68, what was your impression of whither Vietnam?

MILLER: I didn't know. I think one of the things that I did learn is that you have to play the hand that you're dealt. I didn't understand geopolitics at that point. I had no clue what could or could not be done. I knew we were losing on the ground and that an awful lot of our troops were walking around the countryside without a clue of what was going on around them. Every once in a while, we would end up along with Major Jones, the district advisory, trying to bring peace between an Army company protecting field artillery pieces, typically three 105's. Our classic was a company digging into the cemetery around Ba Tri district because the cemetery had headstones of poured concrete. If you were out there trying to stay alive, where would you dig? Next to the poured concrete. And I probably would have, too. Well, the Vietnamese, of course, were outraged. I've never forgotten looking at these young Americans and thinking, "They don't belong here. This is a disaster. We're going to fire harassment and interdiction fire into the bush tonight. We're going to expend 500 H and I rounds, three 105s, to drive the Vietnamese crazy and to win the war." Meanwhile, this whole district is saying, "If those Americans don't get out of our cemetery, we're going to personally go out there and strangle them."

Q: Did you get any feel for the Vietnamese government and their reach and how they operated?

MILLER: Not as much. I saw more of our people than of their people in Saigon, than the Vietnamese leadership.

Q: You left in the spring of '68. We might cover the White House now. What was the White House intern program? What did you do?

MILLER: It's an interesting story. There was a professor at the University of Michigan named Richard Balzhiser. He was a professor of metallurgy at Michigan who ran for mayor in Ann Arbor. Dick was an all-American fullback at Michigan and had gone on to teach. I thought he would have made a good mayor. He lost. But I campaigned for him and we became friends. I went off to Vietnam and Dick was selected as a White House Fellow in the third year of the program. It was a program that John Gardner set up to encourage young Americans to get more involved in senior levels of the government, to see how it worked and hopefully encouraging them to take leadership positions in their communities when they returned home. So, I'm getting the mail in Vietnam one day and there is this letter from Dick Balzhiser that says, "You should apply to the White House Fellows Program." I wrote Dick back and said, "Don't be silly. You're a professor at Michigan. You were an all-American fullback. I'm sitting here in Vietnam." Dick wrote back and said, "Here are the application forms. I've told them you're applying. Fill out the forms." So with those instructions, Mollie and I set out to fill out the forms in Saigon. It was one of those hilarious moments in a marriage. Very little light by which to work, the mosquito netting over the bed, the required picture some left over visa shot, and so.

Q: This would have been the Lyndon Johnson?

MILLER: The last class under Lyndon Johnson. We went through the transition from Johnson to Nixon. I filled out the application in Saigon, mailed it in, got through the paper screening and made it to the Chicago regional panel. The chairman of that panel was Mr. Allen from Booz Allen. I flew back to Chicago and met some people going through the selection process that became lifelong friends of mine for the first time. But I remember going into the interview with Mr. Allen, who finally said, "You know, I don't think I've seen many people who were in Vietnam last week." I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, how are we doing?" I said, "Very badly." I just blurted it out, which is the story of my life. He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "We are not going to win this war. It is a mess." He was stunned. He said he had never heard anybody say that. I just said, "Well, that's the truth." So, I thought, well, there goes that fellowship. It's fun to be in Vietnam. I got back on the plane and went back to Vietnam. Mr. Allen must have admired candor, as I ended up among the 30 finalists. In those days, the final selection was made at a very large country home/conference center in the Virginia countryside known as Airlie House. There, the 30 of us finalists met with the national commission members for a (very) long weekend. The White House Fellows Commission at that point included such people as David Rockefeller, Douglas Dillon, and John Macy, who was head of the Civil Service Commission, just wonderful Americans. That was probably a defining point in my life, getting picked there. Back in those days we probably had 3,000 applicants and we ended up with 18 Fellows. It was another experience in my life when I learned that there is just nothing better than telling the truth. I ended up facing Mr. Dillon and Mr. Rockefeller in a two-person panel one afternoon. That alone was enough to be intimidating. Mr. Rockefeller said, "Your grades at law school weren't very good." I said, "You know, Mr. Rockefeller, I've never cared much about studying." It was truthful?but awful. I could see the Fellowship disappearing at the speed of light. "Oh, gee, there he goes again. Just can't resist being too candid. This isn't going to work." There were four of us from Vietnam. Edgar Kaiser was there who was in Vietnam with AID. I was there. A fellow named Gene Dewey was there. And a guy named Jack Woodmansee. Gene and Jack had both had battalion commands or were going to have battalion commands. Jack went on to command the V Corps in Germany and retired as a lieutenant general. Gene got into AID work and is now a senior guy at AID doing relief work around the world. Edgar and I were both involved in analytic or other kinds of work. I got picked as a fellow for reasons known only to God.

Q: This was a one-year assignment?

MILLER: Yes. I was assigned to the Department of Justice. This was over my very strong objections. Tom Carr, the Director of the program, and one of the finest men ever, did his best to convince me that I really should be doing something with my law degree?so no more matter how hard I protested, it was off to the Justice Department.

Q: And who was the Attorney General?

MILLER: I was assigned to Ramsey Clark.

Q: Oh, my god.

MILLER: Thank you.

Q: He's still a figure.

MILLER: Yes, he is. People blame my schizophrenia on having gone from Ramsey Clark to John Mitchell with no break. I never wanted to be a lawyer. I really was poorly prepared for this position. I didn't want to go to the Justice Department. I ended up staying there for two years. But yes, I was assigned to Mr. Clark and worked on investigating among other things, the police riots at the Democratic Convention in Chicago. Mr. Clark was very giving of his time. I had a chance to chat with him about himself and his dad, Justice Clark, and his view of the world, which was interesting.

Q: It's an interesting take because today if there is a lost cause he is always for it.

MILLER: If there were a crippled dog in the street, Ramsey would be out there looking for it with a can of dog food. It's a nice trait. It is not to be sneezed at.

Q: But he is sort of predictable. But you were catching him at his height. What was his outlook? How did he operate?

MILLER: It's interesting that he was much less scruffy than he is today. He was more Texan. He was more forceful. You put him in the Attorney's General conference room with all the assistant Attorneys General and so forth and he was a much stronger figure than you would guess when looking at the media stuff today. But for all the criticism or commentary today you have to be realistic about this. You don't end up as Attorney General by being a jerk. Ramsey wasn't a jerk. He has today and had then a particular view of the world. He felt that the downtrodden of the world needed protection, and he felt that a real system of justice should care for those that are disadvantaged. Not your average Attorney General. I know of no other attorney general that we've ever had that had that view and acted on it with such vigor since leaving office, which is remarkable. I haven't seen Mr. Clark since he left the office. I actually liked Mr. Mitchell better. While he will clearly go down in history as a terrible scoundrel he was actually a very nice man.

Q: Looking at the police riot, this was treading on the toes of Mayor Dailey, who was the power broker within the Democratic Party by a Democratic administration. What were you looking at? I think it's a very tricky political thing.

MILLER: Well, it was. But that problem was above my labor grade. My task was to be certain that we had all the videotapes from the networks. The first large piece of evidence we had to work with were the tapes from the networks, which was a huge archive. Two minutes gets on television and 10 minutes is hitting the can somewhere. After getting the tapes, we spent hours and hours trying to figure out where the equities lay in these confrontations that occurred between police and demonstrators. Somewhat like instant replay in the National Football League, rather than try to call the play on the impression that Policeman Jones was seen lifting his baton and striking a protestor, we tried to go back through the tape that wasn't on television and watch the half hour of what was occurring. Were things being thrown at the police? Were youngsters spitting on the police? Were the police taunting the protestors? Were police needlessly chasing them? When the police chased demonstrators into the hotel, we had police running down hallways hitting demonstrators. It was a very difficult time. The lessons learned by me were more in the non-prosecutorial area. The real challenges in Chicago involved more psychology then anything else. What happens to police who are fatigued and overstretched and overworked and purposely provoked by people who feel that that had to happen because something had to be done to change the face of American politics? When you get that mixture together, you either have to give the police more rest and better supervision or you need to say to the kids, "You can demonstrate and not have violence. Violence isn't really necessary." Now, knowing a lot of these kids in person, that was not a message that was going to carry well. That's what I took away from it.

Q: When one looks at this, that great movement that has reached almost myth essentially helped elect Richard Nixon as President.

MILLER: You bet. It discredited Humphrey. It was a mess.

Q: When Mitchell came on board?

MILLER: What was that like? That was the darnedest thing. Kevin Phillips was his advance man. Very few people will know who Kevin Phillips is, but he is a very bright conservative writer, a columnist who most recently has written a book on the mal-distribution of income in the United States and its political consequences. But Kevin arrived as the advance man for Mr. Mitchell and frankly had I not been active in the Republican Party activities I probably would not have survived as a Fellow there. But Kevin concluded that I did enough work for the GOP that I wouldn't be an embarrassment to have around the office. So, I stayed and sat in my office, me and the executive assistant to the Attorney General, a fine public servant named Saul Lindenbaum. We were the only two people standing on January 20th when Mr. Mitchell arrived.

I worked with Mr. Mitchell as a White House Fellow for 6 months. Then he asked me to stay on for another year as a confidential assistant. Following my two years with Mr. Mitchell, I remained for another year as the Director of the White House Program, as well as working half time with John Dean at the White House. My impressions of Mr. Mitchell are not those that were formed immediately but things that occurred over a period of time.

I liked Mr. Mitchell a good deal and the reasons were as follows. First of all, it was readily apparent he was in the wrong job. He was a bond lawyer who was a close friend of the President's. He should have been at the White House as a counselor to the President. He shouldn't have been running a big institution. He didn't want to run that institution. He delegated as much of it as he could. He cared about Richard Nixon and about Richard Nixon being President and what Richard Nixon did as President. That's my observation. Secondly, he was married to a woman who was close to being a functioning mentally ill person.

Q: This was Martha.

MILLER: Martha was very strange. Mr. Mitchell never criticized her, never abandoned her in public, and always tried to provide whatever support he could to her. She was truly a bit off center. I thought that was very kind of him. It was a terrible burden for him and he just carried on. Another example of why I liked him. I had in my office, which was maybe 80 feet from his office, my favorite poster of that time and for much of my life, which was a Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee poster of now Congressman John Lewis, then the man running SNCC, praying on the street in Selma. I had gotten that from SNCC headquarters in Selma. I had it framed and it was on the wall of my office. The first time Mr. Mitchell walked in with his famous blue pipe, he looked at the wall and said, "What's that?" I said, "That is my friend John Lewis." He said, "Oh." He knew little about John Lewis and Stokley Carmichael and SNCC and the struggle for control of SNCC which John ultimately lost to the much more radical Carmichael. I suspect that Mr. Mitchell looked upon SNCC as something next to the Marxist Leninist Party of Georgia. I looked upon John as a great non-violent leader of the civil rights movement. All that said, Mr. Mitchell had had no problem with my poster or me. That poster stayed there the whole time. I thought that was pretty interesting. It was also great that Mr. Mitchell did not want to go to meetings of the Domestic Policy Council, which was run by Pat Moynihan because he didn't like Pat Moynihan very much. He said, "You go to these Domestic Council staff things." I couldn't go be the principals' meetings but I could go work with the troops. So, I did that. I had really a fairly free hand to discuss social ideas with a lot of bright youngsters that Pat Moynihan had recruited. I enjoyed that. Bud Krogh, John Dean and I all worked together. Another little insight on how Mr. Mitchell worked involved my staying on for a second year on his staff. The end of my fellowship year was coming up, Bud Krogh and I were out visiting the Los Angeles Police Department looking at the use of Law Enforcement Assistance Administration [LEAA] money. Bud said, "When we get back to Washington, I want you to do x, y, and z." I said, "Bud, I'm not going to be there because my fellowship is ending." He said, "Oh, no, Mr. Mitchell wants you to stay on." I said to Bud, "No, he doesn't. He hasn't talked to me about anything." Bud says, "Oh, yeah, he's already talked to me. He told me what he wants you working on with me." I said, "Okay." So, I went back to Mr. Mitchell and said, "Sir, Bud says I'm supposed to be here this next year." He said, "Oh, yes, did I forget to tell you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Oh, no, I like what you're doing. Just carry on." I got along with Mr. Mitchell fine. I'm very sorry that his life ended the way it did. That said, he was not unfairly treated. The Watergate thing was a catastrophic example of stupidity of which he was one of the architects. But in the end, if Mr. Mitchell were here in the room with us now you would enjoy him.

Q: Did you have a feeling? The Nixon administration ends up sometimes with rather a bum rap on social policy. It was a very fruitful period, particularly early on.

MILLER: Pat Moynihan, Chris DeMuth, John Price, Len Garmet some other people around the White House on the domestic side who were marvelous never got the public recognition they deserved. We had Bob Finch in the Cabinet as Secretary of HEW. We had a lot of interesting social things going on. Mr. Nixon was a much more interesting character than history has portrayed him. That said, there was a very dangerous side to President Nixon which was this paranoid, insecure, vengeful person whom we saw come out in the Watergate mess.

Q: Coming from your experiences of working with civil rights, did you feel comfortable with the Justice Department at this time?

MILLER: Not in the civil rights area. We started backing off that pretty quickly. We did not have great leadership in the Civil Rights Division. I knew all the career people in the division and they were continuing to do a good job, but you saw a change in philosophy in approaches to major cases and so on.

Q: Where was this coming from?

MILLER: I think it represented a philosophy of the administration, not just the Attorney General and his leaders. The concept is one that is being debated today. Put simply, what is the appropriate role for affirmative action and how do you implement it? How do you redress the wrongs of many years of separate and unequal treatment? We don't have a clear answer to that today. We still don't know how to make this work. The Republican approach was less to say, "There will be one black for every two whites in every event" and more to say "We treat people on their merits and we treat them equally." There was a big philosophical shift. I spent more time on the larger domestic policy issues which Pat Moynihan was writing about at the time.

Q: He sounds like a man of tremendous intellectual energy.

MILLER: An amazing man. The memoranda that he was writing in those days were the precursors of his public pronouncements as a senator and it was a treat just to read them.

Q: You did this until when?

MILLER: I did this until '71.

Q: One question about the Fellows Program. Was there a change in the selection process? Was there a litmus test?

MILLER: There was an effort to change it. That led to my being the director. Those of us who had been picked in the first four classes quickly figured out that the Nixon White House wanted a much bigger hand in selecting who were going to be picked and who was not, which is to say we were probably going to face an ideological screening. That would have been absolutely wrong. One of my classmates, a fine friend, and life long friend, Hudson Drake, saw this coming down the road and basically volunteered to become the director of the program for a year. As a former fellow, in our class, he was able to look at everybody and say, "Look, this is how the program works." He asked me if I would follow him as a director for a year, which I did. Then I asked then Colonel Dewey, who at the time had a battalion command at Bearcat I Vietnam, to follow me as the office director, which he did. I think Gene then asked another former Fellow, Bernie Loefke, to follow him on. Bernie served for a year as the director of the program. We did that in an effort to build a firewall between the political operatives in the White House and the integrity of the program.

Q: Was the underside of this thing Haldeman who was calling the political shots?

MILLER: I think that's fair. That's not the individual I would have named, but I don't want to name the individual involved. He's still a prominent person and I think it's unfair to judge these things.

Q: We'll pick this up again. You left the White House when?

MILLER: In '71.

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Q: Today is February 3, 2003. In 1971 you had been with the Fellows Program in the White House. Whither?

MILLER: Well, there is a story as to why I went then. I was working half time for John Dean and half time as the director of the Fellows Program because they didn't really need me to do that full-time. I had known John at the Justice Department before he moved over to be White House Counsel. The seminal event in my departure from the White House came when John Dean asked me if I would set up a safe house here in Washington for the use of the President. I asked John why we needed to do that. He said, "Well, the President might have meetings with people that would be completely off the record and so on," which seemed understandable. Then I said, "Well, you know, the CIA does this for a living. There is no reason to have me involved in anything like this." John said, "Well, the President doesn't want the CIA involved. He wants this to be a completely covert White House operation." I knew at that point that I was going to have to leave. People have asked me why I left and why I didn't get wrapped up in the Watergate mess, having known everybody involved. The answer was not so much moral or ethical at the time as it was practical? a stunning incompetence, or arrogance. I keep trying to explain that to people. For whatever reason, I had concluded at a young age that the thing that kills you in government most quickly is a lack of competence to do what you want to do. Ethical issues are frequently murky, but competence issues are almost always pretty clear. I just said to myself, "This is insane" and started talking to some of my other friends. We talked about the range of activities that we thought were occurring at the White House? with the Tony Yulazowich (phon.) crowd of unusual operators and my friend Bud Krogh. To make a very long story short, I eventually said to a man named Jonathan Rose that I would rather be unemployed than work for President Nixon under these circumstances and I got myself neatly discharged. That turned out to be one of the most fortunate things that ever happened to me, as most of my friends eventually wound up in the Watergate affair, and of course, many went to prison.

Q: In conjunction with Watergate, what was the timing of this? Where were things going?

MILLER: This was probably a year before Watergate broke, something in that timeframe. I think John Dean had known a little of my background in Vietnam and had presumed that I could somehow or other set up something here. That was really what pushed me over the edge. I ended up working for the Westinghouse Electric Corporation in Pittsburgh and made a reputation that served me for 10 years by making a simple prediction. When I got to Pittsburgh, I was introduced to a range of executive vice presidents because of my job. One of them went on to become chairman, a man named Douglas Danforth, who was a fine executive. I sat next to Mr. Danforth at dinner early in my career. He inquired about the administration and asked, "Do you think Nixon will win the election?" I said, "Oh, absolutely." He said, "Well, you must be very pleased with that." I said, "No, Nixon will not serve out his second term." Danforth looked at me as if I were a madman. I said, "Mr. Danforth, I'm telling you Nixon will not survive his second term." I think Danforth thought at that point I was a 28-year old lunatic. But I had a fairly good sense of how far down the road the Administration had gone. I knew it was not defensible and would almost surely become public.

Q: John Dean later ended up in jail for a while.

MILLER: That's right. Most of my friends did.

Q: Here was a very young, bright guy. He seemed to be too young and inexperienced to be counsel to the White House.

MILLER: Right. When I met John, he was the associate deputy attorney general, working under the Deputy Attorney General, Richard Kleindeinst. We, the administration, were trying to pass an omnibus crime bill and John Dean, who was very young, went on a lot of speaking tours, public appearances, around the States, selling the crime bill. He did an exceptionally good job. John is, as we found out, quite credible, very attractive, ostensibly a straightforward, honest fellow. The President and Mr. Haldeman took a real liking to him. I think we were all a little surprised when it turned out that he was going to the White House as the Counsel. I think the President thought that the Counsel's Office was less about serious legal issues than it was about promoting the President's law and order component of his presidency for which John was very well suited. The challenge that John faced, and it was a challenge that sunk any number of youngsters at the White House, was the question of loyalty to their principal, Mr. Haldeman in John's case, Mr. Erlichman in Bud Krogh's case, and their principals asked them to do things that were unwise and ultimately illegal. It was a lack of judgment, of wisdom, more than a lack of intelligence. So, as I got older, I've often said to myself, "You can find smart people. Wise people are very hard to find." The White House lacked wisdom and that was really a catastrophe. President Nixon was a very bright man. And President Nixon was a very wise man 90 percent of the time. He was a vindictive man 10 percent of the time. If the people around him had been wiser and had been able to hold that 10 percent in check, the President would have completed those two terms and gone down in history as quite a remarkable president with a Moynihan/ Garmet//Liberal/Republican involvement in the White House which people forget and the Kissinger outreach to China. Nixon was a remarkably well-prepared president who just had a terribly nasty side to him which was quite small but was quite dangerous.

Q: How did the Haldeman-Erlichman combination work?

MILLER: Competitively. You were working for one or the other. John Dean worked for Mr. Haldeman but Krogh, who I admired immensely worked for Mr. Erlichman. I liked Mr. Erlichman. John Erlichman should get a lot of the credit for the innovative domestic ideas that the President pursued, as should Pat Moynihan. But Mr. Haldeman was a very hard-nosed administrator. Somebody had to be the point man for the President. He didn't like being the point man much himself. So, it fell to Mr. Haldeman to be the nasty fellow and I suspect he was nicer at heart than his role. He had a tough role to play.

Q: Did you get any feeling that you had to watch your back?

MILLER: In anybody's White House, you have to watch your back. The White House has never been filled with uncompetitive people. In some ways it was probably easier than the Roosevelt White House. But you had to be awfully careful about loyalties and avoid situations that would produce irreconcilable differences.

Q: What made you think that Nixon wouldn't last his term?

MILLER: I believed in my heart that the President had launched off on a series of activities that were so imprudent and that they were being so poorly organized that they would explode in some set of circumstances, which I couldn't foresee. But I had a terribly strong conviction that there were very dangerous people working in the Executive Office Building. That is a recipe for catastrophe. It turned out to be true under President Reagan. People working on the White House staff have to have very good judgment and the wisdom to act responsibly. I believe that Brent Scowcroft selected me for some very sensitive responsibilities because he trusted my judgment. As Brent and any number of people have observed, if you pick up the phone from the White House and say, "This is the White House calling," most people pay attention to you. They're supposed to pay attention to it. That's why the government works. If you abuse that, if you are a Marine major who believes that you must act outside the system to protect national security, if you're the Counsel to the President who really believes that the President should be running special operations out of the EOB, you are cruising for a catastrophe.

Q: People coming up with crazy ideas of bypassing this or doing that? That's cafeteria talk by young people.

MILLER: No, it was serious talk by serious people with real big offices in the Executive Office Building and it's dangerous. I was aided in making these judgments by a very good friend of mine who was the deputy at the White House Fellows Program, Tom Pauken who had been president of the College Republicans when I first met him. Tom knew some of the other people working around John Dean so that when Tom and I talked a little bit about Dean and his collection of operators we had a pretty good triangulation on the backgrounds of the people involved and the reasons they had been hired and the skills they had. We just both felt it was terribly inappropriate, so we both left. He went on to become head of the Republican Party in Texas. A good fellow. We both said, "This is going to blow up."

Q: Was there any sense of rats leaving a sinking ship?

MILLER: No.

Q: Or just disassociate yourself?

MILLER: They were thrilled to have us gone and we were thrilled to be gone. Certainly at that age and even in those circumstances I can't imagine having done anything else. Even when John Dean went to the President with this famous "There is a cancer on the presidency" conversation, I'm not sure that the President really understood how bad this was.

Q: Was there any voice of reason, of wisdom, an older person with some clout sitting there who people had to worry about?

MILLER: None that I ever encountered. I suppose that if there had been such a person, it might have been Mr. Mitchell. If he had left the Justice Department and gone to the White House as a counselor to the President perhaps he could have prevented Watergate. It is on the public record that Mr. Mitchell sat through some meetings with some proposals from Republican National Committee and is quoted as saying, "That is just too stupid for words. Please get out of my office." If some adult like Mr. Mitchell close enough to the President to close the door on the Oval Office and say, "Sir, there is a complete mismatch of risk-benefit equations being developed here in the White House," history might have been changed. Clearly the President was going to win reelection. There was no reason to break into the Democratic National Committee.

Q: It was just vindictive.

MILLER: It was very strange.

Q: You then left. How old were you?

MILLER: I was born in '42 and I left in '71. I was 29. I had always dreamt of being a public servant, held the presidency in the highest regard, was a member of the Bar of the District of Columbia, but I wanted nothing more than to get out of town, not be involved in public service, not be a lawyer in Washington, and decided that the route to salvation was going to be to learn how to earn an honest living by making money running a business in the private sector. Through a serendipitous process, I ended up with Westinghouse in Pittsburgh.

Q: You were there for how long?

MILLER: Ten years.

Q: When you went to Westinghouse, these large corporations have their own personhow would you describe Westinghouse?

MILLER: Ultimately it proved to be a fatally flawed persona. Westinghouse collapsed as a corporation long after I left. The person that attracted me to Westinghouse is a man very important in my own history, whose name is Tom Murrin. The last time I heard of Tom, he was dean of the Duquesne Business School. But Tom at the point he hired me was about 38, was the youngest executive vice president at Westinghouse, I suspect in the history of the company. He was running the Defense and Public Systems components of Westinghouse. We had an interesting time together. Tom had been a tackle for Fordham when Vince Lombardi was the line coach. So, Tom lived and died by Vince Lombardi's approach to life. I became a great disciple of that approach as well although I'm about 100 pounds smaller than Murrin. It is an interesting story of how you succeed in the world. I met Mr. Murrin here in Washington at the Westinghouse offices and we had this marvelous conversation. At the end of it, he said, "You know, you have no business experience, and really know nothing about business." I said, "I understand that." He said, "But you know something? I know nothing about many of the business areas that I have been given." I said, "I didn't know that. That's interesting." He said, "I'm losing a great deal of money." I said, "I didn't know that either, Sir." He said, "I'll make you a deal. You come to Pittsburgh for a month and I'll pay you as a consultant. I want you to see some of the things that we're working on. At the end of the month, let's have another conversation and see what we do." So, we had two children and Mollie was six months pregnant at that point? and we had no money. We moved into a motel in Pittsburgh. We didn't have enough money to fix the mufflers on the car. I spent a month looking at a lot of the non-defense activities that Mr. Murrin was responsible for. At that point, we were the largest builder of subsidized housing in the United States. We were trying to bring new technology to medical diagnostics, and on and on. I went through these business units with a specific eye on whether the executives leading these activities had any sense for the public sector.

Q: What do you mean by the public sector?

MILLER: We were dealing with the construction of low cost housing and solving the issues of large public housing projects like Cabrini-Green in St. Louis. We had a plant in Bedford-Stuyvesant that was making fluorescent lamp fixtures. We had highly technical automated diagnostic equipment we were trying to develop to save time for medical professionals and on and on, a whole range of projects. But over the 30 days, I reached the conclusion that the managers we had were almost all out of traditional businesses in Westinghouse that are largely electrical engineering driven. I reached the conclusion that we really didn't know what we were doing. I said to myself, "Well, I'm at this awkward point. I'm going to have to see Mr. Murrin at the end of 30 days and I can either tell him that things are hunky-dory and I'll figure out how to solve it, at which point I might have money for dinner on the 31st day in Pittsburgh, or I could go see him and tell him that we were a sinking ship." I really did not see how he was going to salvage all of this stuff. I didn't think our management had a clue what they were doing. I went in to see Mr. Murrin in the morning and said, "You know, Sir, it's been a great 30 days, but I think you're in terrible trouble. I don't think it's going to work. It's a mess." He said, "You're right. You're hired." That was yet another interesting experience for me about telling the truth to people even in the most difficult of circumstances. We had a wonderful relationship for a decade. He always knew that I would tell him the truth. But he did end that meeting with a classic Murrin piece of advice that was, "This is the last time you get to come into the office and tell me that there is a problem if you don't have an answer." He said, "I typically know where the problems are. But frequently I don't know what the answers are, so next time you come back, give me an answer for one of these things." I spent years working for him, before he launched me to Nigeria to manage one of the most difficult projects the company had committed itself to.

Q: While you were doing this, how did you find business responding to things? Were you dealing still with things that were designed with "social benefits?"

MILLER: Right.

Q: You take an engineer producing something that is going to produce a socio-benefit. This isn't the best combination.

MILLER: No, it's not.

Q: But you need an engineer to get the product going.

MILLER: Right. There was at the time in our land this marvelous theory propagated by John Gardner and bought by many people, including the chairman of Westinghouse, Don Burnham, that industrial competence was the answer to social problems and that any social problem that could be loosely put under a profit making entity would be solved. I think that's a loser. It was then. It is today. The problems with public housing are related a great deal to the social problems of people living in public housing as opposed to the efficiency of the building or the maintenance of the physical structure. But we were on that kick. It left me with a permanent impression that you ought not overrate the usefulness of a market economy to solve social issues. Social issues are different. Corporations that make gas turbines that are just hunky-dory don't necessarily have the competence to go into the field of medical care and say, "Well, we can automate a doctor's office like this so you never see a human being; you sit there and you take an automated test for 5 days. Then at the end of it a voice would have said, "You have leukemia. Good luck and good bye.'" That's not how people want medicine delivered. That's how an engineer can build you an office. And so I had a great time with it. I loved Mr. Murrin. I got to work all around the world. I did business plans for us in many different countries: Iran, Egypt, Brazil, England, Japan, and Korea. I had a wonderful time.

Q: This would be '72 to '82.

MILLER: Right.

Q: How did you find a company like Westinghouse could interact with the business side in South Korea or something like that? There is always a difference in outlook and all this. Did you find yourself getting involved in this?

MILLER: Yes, and in fact became at one point the director of Corporate International Relations for the whole corporation. It became apparent over the 3 or 4 years that I was in the Defense and Public Systems Business Unit that the kind of work I was doing for them should have been done for the whole corporation. In the last two years before I went to Nigeria, that's really what I did. At that point, Westinghouse had 140 profit centers operating around the world with very loose cohesion in any particular sovereign entity. The issue was that all sovereign entities presumed that Westinghouse was a single corporation illustrated most clearly to me by the time we were trying to sell Iran, still under the government of the Shah, six nuclear reactors for power generation. I can't remember what the pricing was on that, but the sale would have been something in the range of $3-4 billion. Our guys got to the anteroom immediately before going in to see the Shah and the military aide said, "Westinghouse? I have a refrigerator at home and it doesn't work." I think that man got a refrigerator faster than anybody in the world. But our guys came out of that and said, "See that? That's the problem. It's a single corporation. If a little fractional horsepower motor fails and you're trying to sell nuclear power plants, people say, 'That's the same corporation.'" So, I was trying to wrestle with developing what we would call today a matrix structure that would leave your profit centers operating efficiently but would provide a coherent enough presence that we wouldn't drop the ball on any product line so badly that we could injure the whole account. I did that for a couple of years. I found that really interesting. That also gets back to the culture of, if you are operating in Japan - and Mitsubishi was a huge partner of Westinghouse - how do we get along with Mitsubishi? Are we selling? Are we licensing? Are we whatever?

Q: You mentioned nuclear? Westinghouse was putting up nuclear plants.

MILLER: Yes.

Q: Was there any concern about nuclear power?

MILLER: Not at all, never has been.

Q: Was there any problem of concern about what use the nuclear waste might? Were there constraints where we had to watch this?

MILLER: First of all, there was no terrorism problem. There was the following position. Westinghouse was run almost entirely by engineers. Westinghouse had built every naval nuclear reactor save one. Only one boat was powered by GE reactors. There has never been a naval nuclear accident involving the power plant. They went to land based pressurized water exchange systems, which is what Westinghouse built. There was never a big accident with those. We finally got to the plant in Pennsylvania, Three Mile Island, in which there was a problem but fundamentally the guys never had a doubt in their mind that they could build any range of nuclear power plants safely. The waste storage problem was underestimated. The guys, like all engineers, said, "Let us work on it long enough and there will be a way to store or destroy or find a use for the radioactive materials left at the end of a useful life power plant life." We were very afraid of the Russian reactors. We had a lot of conversations with the Russians. They wanted our technology. We were not selling it to them. Their approach to safety was, we felt, not responsible and the Chernobyl thing turned out to illustrate that.

Q: Did Westinghouse put up the reactors in South Korea?

MILLER: I think so.

Q: I think so, too. This was an ongoing thing when I was in South Korea.

MILLER: Yes. I have been to South Korea with the president of the Power Systems Company and I think those were all our reactors.

Q: As you watched the Watergate thing develop, did you keep a distance?

MILLER: I was called quite frequently by the lead prosecutor, Henry Ruth. There were a number of different meetings that happened around Watergate that were interesting and important. I had worked with John Doar at the Civil Rights Division and had stayed in touch with him because he was working in Bedford-Stuyvesant where I had worked. I went to Bed-Stuyvesant coincidentally?

Q: What is that?

MILLER: Bedford-Stuyvesant is in Brooklyn and it is a predominantly African-American neighborhood loosely referred to as a ghetto. Mr. Doar was working there on a project (Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration and Development Corporation) to bring investment into the neighborhood. I knew that Mr. Doar was about to be named counsel to the House Committee to consider the impeachment of the President. Mr. Doar knew that I had worked for President Nixon. We were sitting together just a few days before his appointment was to be announced and he looked out the big window behind his desk over Bed-Stuy and he said, "David, is there any chance that the President did not know about what these people were doing?" I said, "Absolutely none." President Nixon was a detail oriented, control freak and the odds that the President was not personally involved were nil. I told Mr. Doar that. He just said, "Thank you. That's interesting." Then for many months afterward, Henry Ruth, the prosecutor in many of the cases of my friends who went to prison, would call me in Pittsburgh and say, "David, I have the records of a meeting here in the Attorney General's office in which an unidentified staff aide was taking minutes of this and that. The good news is that that was not me." I had people calling me from all sides all the time. Henry would call and say, "There was a meeting on x date. You weren't there, were you?" I said, "No." I managed to stay fairly close to the proceedings. It all ended up with the oddest of situations in which the head of the Bureau of Prisons, Norm Carlson, who was a very decent man - and Bud Krogh - Norm Carlson and I worked together on all sorts of law enforcement issues. I would call Norm and say, "When I'm in Pittsburgh, I'm going to driver over and see Bud at the Allenwood prison farm." Norm would say, "Okay, I'll call ahead to make sure there is no problem and that Bud will be available." I'd go over to Allenwood and see Bud, who was a great American and who landed on his feet. He subsequently climbed Mount Everest and got himself reinstated to the Bar in the State of Washington. A great guy.

Q: All this time you were in the White House, did Spiro Agnew come across your sites?

MILLER: Not much. No, I had a very good friend who was Vice President Agnew's White House Fellow, so I heard stories about the Vice President. I never worked with him personally and don't know enough to comment other than he was probably the wrong man in the job, as I think history proved.

Q: In Westinghouse, towards the end were you beginning to feel restive?

MILLER: What happened was that there is this bizarre series of events that got me from Pittsburgh to Lagos, Nigeria. I basically had spent six years doing senior staff work in a corporation. If you're going to advance in a corporation, you've got to go manage something and clearly my long suit would have been to manage an international project. So, it turned out that Westinghouse had signed a whole bunch of contracts in Nigeria, the primary one being a telecommunications system. But the corporation could not get anybody to go to Nigeria to manage the projects. Mr. Murrin called me in one day and said, "David, it's time for you to go run a project." I said, "That's great. My wife and I are ready to go." He said, "We think you ought to go to Nigeria." I said, "What are we doing in Nigeria?" I listened to that whole thing and said, "Well, why me and Mollie?" He said, "Well, you've both been in Vietnam and you're hearty souls and it's going to take hearty souls to do Nigeria." So the corporation flew us out there to take a look at the situation and we thought it was sufficiently grim that I promised my wife we'd never take the job. I came back to Pittsburgh and went in to see Mr. Murrin and said, "Tom, we're great friends. I've always been honest with you. I promised my wife I'd never take the job." He said, "You go home, talk to Mollie again. Anything she wants, we'll give her." I said, "Okay." I went home and said, "Mollie, anything we want they'll give." So, we came up with what was sort of an outrageous support package based on Mollie's talking to the wives of oil company executives and so on. The most important thing turned out to be her insistence that the Westinghouse Foundation allow us to donate money in Nigeria. We were not going to go abroad without a charitable package at our fingertips because of the social problems in Nigeria. We sort of put all of these things down in a meeting with Mr. Murrin and every time Mollie thought she'd put another outrageous proposal on the table, Mr. Murrin said, "We can do that." At the end of the meeting, we were going to Nigeria. That led to four very challenging years in Nigeria. It was both a wonderful experience, and very, very difficult.

Q: What was the situation in '76?

MILLER: Murtala Mohamad had just been assassinated. He was a military head of government, the chap after whom the airport in Lagos is named, a bright young reforming man. He was killed. General Olusegun Obasanjo came in to help straighten out the government and it was a good time in Nigeria. Oil revenues were up. There was a lot of hope. It was and is today a difficult place to work. But for me, it was a great learning experience. We were building things and pouring concrete all around the country and solving technical problems. I enjoyed it immensely. It turned out that I enjoyed Africa. The fateful thing that happened in this period of time is that a White House Fellow friend of mine, Peter Krogh, who was dean of the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown. I had always stayed in touch with Peter, and when I was hiring some new employees for Westinghouse, got permission from the corporation to hire some youngsters out of the Georgetown School of Foreign Service. Frankly, I thought the corporation needed some leavening in its electrical engineering pie. Peter introduced me to a fellow running the master's program at Georgetown's School of Foreign Service, named Chet Crocker. The rest is history. Chet was selected by Secretary George Shultz and the President to become the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. And Chet asked me to become our Ambassador to Tanzania.

Q: Let's talk about Nigeria. What was Westinghouse doing?

MILLER: The primary thing we were doing was deploying a tethered aerostat communications system. Fundamentally, Westinghouse was building helium filled aerostats of about 400,000 cubic feethat's an 11-story building that is about 200 feet long - that derives its lift not only from the helium, but also from its shape, which is why it's called an aerostat. It flew at about 10,000 feet and was capable of taking something like 4,500 pounds of electronic gear to altitude. They had been used before and since by the Israelis to look over borders. On the borders of the United States, they're used as lifting vehicles here, there, and elsewhere. They were a very new technology at that time and one that the Nigerians and Westinghouse felt might solve some real problems for Nigeria. That is, you could cover all of Nigeria's broadcasting space with five of these sites. The aerostats were big enough that you could haul to altitude equipment to broadcast in all the major languages of Nigeria at one time. You wouldn't end up putting the station in the east of Nigeria that spoke only Ibo and the station in the north that spoke only Hausa. So, it seemed to fit a social need as well as an engineering need. That was the primary activity I worried about.

It turned out retrospectively that the weather conditions, particularly in the south of Nigeria, were just too extreme for the system to work. We could not produce a system that would either fly through and withstand the thunderheads that build up on the west coast of Africa, which are pretty impressive, or a system that would get down fast enough from altitude so that we could see a storm coming and get the aerostat tethered. I left before we ever really got into operation, but I got the first ones up and flying. That said, it never worked right. Ultimately it was canceled, which is a shame because we all thought it would have suddenly been a way? without building a plethora of ground towers and worrying about power for all the repeating stations and everything? to broadcast television and radio to the entire country. We thought we had an answer and we did not. But I poured a lot of concrete.

Q: How did you find dealing with the Nigerians? I've never served there, but I get the e-mails that everybody else does from con men. A friend of mine is a banker and said, "Any Nigerian if he walked into the bank, we'd try to shut the place down because he could outthink us and come up with a scheme faster than anyone else."

MILLER: It's a richly deserved reputation, which is a shame because there are many different Nigerians. Ethnically, it's a very complex country. But in general, I'm very fond of the Nigerians. They work very hard. They're competent. I'm fond of saying to the Nigerians that I have never seen a country in which a government has done less with its human talent than Nigeria. Their government has been a disaster for Nigeria for reasons that are hard to explain. But the average Nigerian if given an opportunity to work hard will do that. Typically he or she is industrious, funny, friendly, and helpful. There is this bizarre fraud side to Nigeria. It's got to be world class. It's something that the Nigerians have got to deal with and they understand that, but they don't quite know how to. Talking about Nigeria is a whole added book. I enjoyed my time there, as did my family? most of the time. Mollie did some great work at the National Museum, and her own project on traditional facial scarification along the Cameroon border. It gave us our first taste of Africa. Most importantly, it prepared me for the two ambassadorial tours and left me with a sense that if you're going to be a political appointee, you best have some knowledge of what you're doing. When I got to Tanzania, I had spent as much time in Africa as many of my Foreign Service officers. So that was very helpful.

Q: I hate to dwell on this, but the world-class fraud element to the personality in Nigeria, running a big business there with lots of money, did you have??

MILLER: Every day the fraud problems were lurking somewhere. They went from big problems to small problems. Big problems would be illustrated by the fact that at one point they owed Westinghouse $20 million in arrearages on invoices that were due. I could not pay anybody to get those invoices paid on time. So, they sat on the desk of a particular official and I went down to that official's office virtually every day for weeks if not months. We had a pleasant chat every day and I knew full well that he would never quite get around to paying those if there wasn't some way to pay him off, and there wasn't. Eventually it got solved, but I was very proud of the fact that I went through a Senate confirmation not too many months after I got back from Nigeria and was able to establish beyond a shadow of a doubt that I survived four years in Nigeria without doing anything wrong. But, gee, it was hard.

Q: You've got an official who's sitting there waiting for a payoff.

MILLER: Right.

Q: And you're not going to give it. How do you do that?

MILLER: Eventually you out wait them. You literally just out wait them. Secondly, as part of that, you're as sympathetic as you can be and that is, here is an official who's paid virtually nothing who is responsible for trying to keep his or her family together, not only the family in Lagos but the extended family in the region they came from, and you have to let an official know that you're not refusing to pay them because you don't like them or you don't understand their family problems, it's strictly against U.S. law. Much as I would love to make Al-Haji Schmalz independently wealthy, I'd end up going to prison. Many of them don't understand that. You have to explain how the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act works. Then you need, frankly, in our case a marvelous lawyer in Lagos, a chap named Godfry Amacri, who had been Nigeria's ambassador to the UN, had been president of the General Assembly at some time, was back in Nigeria practicing law, and I would sit down with Godfry and say, "Sir, these are my problems." He would on occasion say, "Well, I can do something about that. I'll go talk to the president or the minister." Or he would say, "Just let it ride for a while, David. You're just stuck in the normal slowness of this thing. If you want me to send a message back to Pittsburgh saying you're doing a fine job trying to get the money, I'll do that." Godfry educated me and kept me from doing dumb things. There are wonderful, honest Nigerians such as Godfry as well as crooked, nasty Nigerians. You need to develop a group of friends who are wonderful, honest Nigerians and they will keep you out of trouble. That's what you do.

Q: I can see though that working for a corporation like Westinghouse, you get some vice president or something saying, "I'm not going to put up with this goddamned stuff" and sending somebody out or going out themselves and saying, "Listen here, we're not going to pay and you've got to get this done or we're pulling out."

MILLER: I'll tell you what that produces. My IBM colleague died of a heart attack. He was caught between Armonk, New York (corporate headquarters) and Nigeria. The people at IBM leadership were so insensitive to the problems he faced that he died from the stress. He just turned into a pool of butter and croaked. I had sensitive management. Mr. Murrin was my boss during this period of time. Tommy knew if there was any way I could solve it, I would have solved it, and Tommy knew I wasn't going to break the law and that's where we were.

Q: The Corrupt Practices Act came about?

MILLER: It came about just about the time I was arriving out there. It just couldn't have been more exciting for me.

Q: What was the feeling of the international community? At this point, Nigeria had tons of money from oil. Were your British and French colleagues laughing at you?

MILLER: Oh, somewhat. It seemed to be a completely unrealistic posture. Certainly from a European standpoint it was an unrealistic posture. European corporations could write off as a business expense payments that we would consider illegal. So, we just come from a different culture.

Q: Was it hard to make the point both within your corporation that this was illegal and in Lagos? They must have been dealing with this in the normal way before this.

MILLER: Sure. They actually were pretty good. I don't know quite why. But we had a structure. You have to get into the weeds of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act to understand this. There are two things that are pretty critical about the FCPA that are worth examining. First of all, you can offer facilitating payments for services that are due you. Frequently in Nigeria that is the kind of stuff that drives you crazy. You can't get your cargo clear from the port. You can't get driver's licenses for 10 new hires, etc. If the amount of money is small and if the payment is for services that are due you, that is, you are not breaking the law, there is nothing that you're getting that is not due you under the law, you can offer a small payment to facilitate that service. If I remember the law correctly in those days, if you offered more than $10,000 during a year, if you executed more than $10,000 worth of facilitating payments, you had to report this to the U.S. Government and you had to have a list of the names of the people that received the payments. So, in something like 1977 after I completed my first fiscal year in Lagos, the general counsel from Westinghouse sent out his usual worldwide message that said, "Has anybody paid more than $10,000 in facilitating payments," assuming that there would be dead silence from the Westinghouse universe. Well, I pitched up with my list of 200-300 Nigerians, all of whom had received payments to get our goods out of the port and so on. Impeccable record keeping, frankly. And the general counsel sent a thing back saying, "Is this all accurate?" and I said, "Sure." He said, "That's fine." So, that you can do some things to speed up the process in countries such as Nigeria, which is part of looking at the law the way a lawyer looks at the law. "What can I do that is legal?" The other thing is that when you get to the big dollarCharlie wants or receives a few million dollarfirst of all, you can't just give Charlie millions of dollars. The law says if you're going to pay somebody it has to be a reasonable amount of money for the benefits provided. And it has to be for services rendered. And it has to be paid pari passu. You can't give a guy a lump of money at the start of a contract that you have reason to believe was used to obtain the contract. That is to say, money for a bribe. That's illegal. You can pay somebody a regular sum of money every month, like Godfry Amacri, for legal service. And he was due that. He saved my behind any number of times. So, could I look at somebody and say, "Was Godfry's service worth every dollar?" You bet it was. Was it paid in a manner that would have allowed him to pay somebody off? Nope. Not unless Godfry wanted to front something. Is it like Clark Clifford? Pretty close. A lot of people pay a lot of lawyers in this town get an awful lot of money for advice that's pretty much beyond the drafting of trusts and estates and they make hefty campaign contributions. And that's sort of how things happen in Nigeria.

Q: It's usually entree.

MILLER: Sure. Patton, Boggs and Blow would be starving if they were just trying to draft contracts. That's how you did Nigeria. If you set your mind to it, I have to this day the most wonderful, straightforward, honest Nigerians with whom I'm in contact all the time working on how to make the Obasanjo government work better. There are a lot of straight Nigerians.

Q: During this '76-'80 period, how did you find your contacts in the Nigerian government?

MILLER: Not much. Really if you're into the commercial world you didn't see as much. You spent most of your time just trying to build things. Every one of our sites had advanced weather radar. Weather radars need power stations. Power stations need Caterpillar diesels, which need reinforced concrete footings to stand on. If you want to have reinforced concrete footings in the Niger River delta, you've got to have a dry construction site. You've got to have a cleared and compacted site. You've got to have rebar that's well put together. That's what I spent a lot of time on.

Q: Did you find that you ever used the embassy or contacted or consulted with it?

MILLER: I used the embassy a lot. First of all, at the embassy was Ambassador Don Easum. Don Easum is one of the finest U.S. ambassadors who ever served in Africa and had in essence been sent into exile in Nigeria by Henry Kissinger for disagreeing with the Secretary on something. But Don was the model of an American ambassador from whom I learned an immense amount. Among other things, he would have all of us business guys in at least once a month to talk about how we were doing, had his house open to us for tennis or other events that people wanted to pursue. Don looked at the residence as being an asset paid for by the American taxpayers that ought to be used in that manner. Don was and is a great man. At one point Hughes and Westinghouse were going to compete for some defense radar contracts in Nigeria. Don called us both in and said, "I believe that the Nigerians will be best served if they buy an American radar. I know you two guys are competing. If it's okay with you, I'll represent both of you." We looked at each other and he said, "I will give you the same briefing at the same time on any information that I learn that is of common interest to you. If I hear specific criticisms of your projects, I will pass those back only to the affected corporation. Can you guys live with that?" We said, "Of course we can." Contrast this with the standard baloney that you get from most ambassadors and from the State Department, "If there are two or more American corporations, we don't know what to do. We really can't help anyone." Ambassador Easum solved this in a 10-minute meeting and I took that same attitude with me to Tanzania and on to Zimbabwe afterward. Don was such a good friend that when the Tanzania opportunity came up, Don was back in the United States and I called him. I said, "Don, I have this opportunity to be an ambassador but I don't want to take it if you think it's wrong. I want to talk to you about a responsible way for a political appointee to behave." I went up to New York and Don laid out a game plan. It was wonderful. That's how political appointees ought to do it. Don sat down and said, "Are you curtailing the tour of a career officer?" "Nope. It's a normal rotation. A new ambassador is going to go out." "Okay, that's okay." "What skills do you bring to Tanzania? How does Dr. Crocker explain this to the career officers." "Well, we want a political guy next to Nyerere because Nyerere is the leader of the Frontline States with whom we are negotiating to implement UN Resolution 435. We want to get South Africa solved. He's going to have a hard time understanding Reagan. He's going to have a hard time understand Crocker. We want a personal friend of Crocker's out there." And so we went through this whole checklist. That was the first step toward making my six State Department years very productive. I learned a lot from that embassy in Lagos and I think Don Easum's a giant, as does everybody else who's ever worked with him. That's not an unusual observation.

Q: What about the social life in Nigeria?

MILLER: Some with the embassy, but mainly other people in the business community. The Nigerians loved to entertain. The Nigerians bring to entertaining their happy disregard of time, which I think is the most wonderful thing about Nigerian entertaining or entertaining them in country. That is, you can have a dinner party scheduled for 6:00 or 7:00 PM and maybe half the guests arrive then, maybe most of the guests arrive then, some of the other guests are just as liable to arrive at 11:00 PM and say, "We just got out of another party. How are you?" That infectious happiness, enthusiasm, makes social life fun. We had a fine social life.

Q: When talking about Africa, you always have to bring up the French influence. You weren't head to head with them at all?

MILLER: No.

Q: On the francophone side-

MILLER: Oh, heavens. That's a whole different thing.

Q: But they just weren't particular players?

MILLER: No, and we had no big French competitors. Our competitors would have been Siemens (German) or Phillips (Dutch) or GE or Hughes. And ABB was a Swiss company at that time. The Japanese weren't very strong in most of our product areas.

Q: Was this a period when there were pictures of the tie-up at the port?

MILLER: Yes.

Q: And cement, which has to come in by? This must have been a pain in the ass.

MILLER: There were 98 cement ships or something like that floating off the coast. It was simply a demurrage scam. There were hulls that never should have been afloat on anybody's ocean loaded with cement that probably never would have set shipped to Nigeria. They sat offshore and they drew whatever the heck the demiurge rate was for every day. That was how people were making money. The rest of us were trying to get goods imported in and out through the Appapa port. It was a zoo. I knew everybody at that port. I kid you not. We went down and supervised the offloading of every shipment that we brought in. I know a lot of cargo supers and I've stared into a lot of hulls to make sure that we have things rigged right and the trucks were set up right. My favorite story was working with a guy who had gotten his truck into a very awkward position. He had come down next to the ship and he worked immensely hard to get the whole truck around so that the flatbed tie-down trailer was right next to the water and the tractor was headed up hill. I said, "Boy, that was really hard." He said, "Yeah, but I have really bad brakes. I was afraid if we loaded it on and I was nose down to the water, I might not have been able to keep the truck there." I said, "You've got to be kidding." He said, "No." That's what you're working with. So I had my guys come over and look at the truck and look at the brakes and see if we could fix that. You would get trucks that didn't have tie-downs for the containers. Every imaginable problem occurred in that port and we were there all the time.

Q: You left in 1980. What was your feeling about whither Nigeria?

MILLER: I was concerned then that there was not going to be any happy endings. I didn't see the forces that were going to lead to improvements. Of course, I wasn't in the political realm, so the judgments were all very impressionistic and very much from a mid-to-lower middle level kind of player. I knew the country because I had a fleet of 50 Ford pickup trucks. I could go anywhere in the bush. I could build anything. It seemed even at that time that a general dishonesty was just a crippling problem for the country and it still is. But on the big issue of how you select national leaders, I had no clue and had no particular interest.

Q: Did you feel this was place American firms should invest in and that the future as an investment prospect was good?

MILLER: Not really. I was agnostic on that. If you wanted to look at the FCPA, if you wanted to look at the corruption problem, the product you want to sell in Nigeria is one in which you have the only technology in the world to do X, you have the sophistication of your management to survive in that market, you have employees that can execute the contract if you win it. In essence, you had a product that allowed you to in effect enter into a sole source bid for something. If you do that, you're fine because you can walk away if you don't like their terms. The French are not going to arrive, just to pick on the French, and undercut your commercial tactics. Your management is sophisticated enough to not spend too much money at the start trying to get it. Obtaining the contract takes a careful management of time and money. If you have all that, you can work in Nigeria. The oil companies have developed a way to survive in Nigeria. Granted, their world was very different. The product you don't want to take to Nigeria is a fungible good made by 12 different manufacturers.

Q: What caused you to leave Nigeria?

MILLER: I had been there almost continuously for four years. That was a good long tour. I came back to the Westinghouse Defense Center at the Baltimore airport, now owned by Northrop Grumman.

Q: Before we leave Nigeria, you mentioned charity. What sort of charitable things were you doing?

MILLER: Mollie did a lot of work in the slums in Lagos, which were grim, giving money to local churches and local women's groups and so on. She got involved in supporting the little communities around our construction sites. Then she went to work at the national museum on anthropological projects. She was able to do research on the Cameroonian border on facial scarification and how much was still going on. Really fascinating work, all of it outside of the for profit structure. Frankly, just as in my case, this exposure of Mollie to the social problems of the continent, and her charitable work, allowed her to assume a very active and successful role as an Ambassador's wife in Tanzania and Zimbabwe where she pursued the same activist role.

Q: You came back to Baltimore. What were you doing there?

MILLER: I was working on the issue of international military sales. Westinghouse built the radar for the F-4, of which there were about 5,000 in the world. Then we built the AWACS radar on the floor up there. Then ultimately we built the radar for the F-16. Each of these products involved the political issues of military sales and very frequently the issue of off setting investments for local manufacturing. So, I worked very briefly? for about nine months? in that area. By far the most notable event of that period was not what I did at Westinghouse, but what I did to support Mollie's work in the Reagan campaign. The first indication of my priorities came when I told them I was going to be working halftime. Fortunately, I had a reputation of being somewhat eccentric, but I did not think very highly of Jimmy Carter. I was particularly outraged at his inability to get American hostages out of the embassy in Iran. I thought that was a terribly bad precedent for international behavior that we tolerated. My wife, Mollie, had worked in the Goldwater campaign and was one of the gang of people that had worked in national campaigns for the Republican Party. She got a call asking her to become the executive director of the Business Committee for Reagan-Bush, ultimately headed by Matt Baldridge who became Secretary of Commerce. The campaign was operating out of an office building in the Northern Virginia suburbs. We had three little kids. So when she had this opportunity to play a major role in the campaign I thought it was great. I told her, " That's the biggest contribution I can make to the defeat of Jimmy Carter." So, I went to the Westinghouse management and said, "I've got to go home to take care of the kids every day." They looked at me and said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Well, you've got two options: I'll quit or I'm going to leave every day at 1:30 or 2:00 because my wife has an opportunity to really do something important." So, with my reputation at Westinghouse, they said, "Okay, come in early, go home early." So, for three or four months of the campaign, I went home every day and I made spaghetti and hamburgers for the kids. That diet never changed. But it allowed Mollie to make a terrific contribution to the campaign and that was how I supported the Reagan campaign. That was probably the most important thing that happened in the whole Baltimore tour.

Q: With these F-4s, F-16s, AWACS, these were highly political as far as other countries wanting them, putting them in. Did this impede on you at all?

MILLER: No. That's sort of interesting. I really was still operating in some ways below that labor grade. At least in Westinghouse in those days an executive vice president or president of one of our companies, of which there were like three, ended up cutting the kinds of deals in which if Spain bought 60 F-16s, which was a General Dynamics aircraft, then GD and Westinghouse, and other major suppliers made a commitment to manufacture so much of the aircraft in Spain. At my level, a guy named Nick Petrou, the executive vice president of the Baltimore facility would haul me in and say, "Well, we've sold 60 of these things to Spain. These are the Westinghouse assets in country. We're making low voltage transformers or this or that. We've told the Spanish we're going to use our best efforts to increase our activities in Spain by $3-4 million. Get thee to Madrid, talk to the business unit managers, and figure out what we can do." That was right in the kind of work I liked. I liked getting investment abroad. I think building things is fun. So, I missed out on what I suppose was the most fun? sitting around with the defense minister in Spain saying, "Hey, the F-16 is really a better aircraft than the Mirage." I was still trying to just make the sale work. The single most challenging problem in this area involved the sale of nuclear power plant to Yugoslavia. A group vice president, who sold the nuclear reactor to the Yugoslavs, came back to Pittsburgh. He was president of the Power Systems Company. He came back and said, "We have sold the Yugoslavs a 900 megawatt pressurized water reactor system, but I promised them something in the range of a $10 million dollar investment in Yugoslavia." I said, "John, we don't have anything in Yugoslavia and there is a good reason for that. It's just not great market for us." He said, "David, I've promised them $10 million of investment. Now your challenge is to go do it." I left before I would have failed on that assignment. I'm not sure that was doable. But that's the kind of stuff I was working on. It was challenging.

Q: What happened after Ronald Reagan was elected?

MILLER: Chet Crocker was appointed Assistant Secretary of State. He called one day and asked me to meet him at the old hotel across from the State Department, the one next to the Foreign Service Officers club. Over a bowl of chili, he said, "I want you to be an ambassador." You could have knocked me over with a feather. I said, "I'd love to be an ambassador." He said, "I'll tell you where I want you to go. I want you to go to Tanzania because Julius Nyerere is going to be very important to us and he's got to understand us better. I want you to do that." I was thrilled.

Q: You were in Tanzania from when to when?

MILLER: '81-'84. Here is the cable announcing my arrival on November 3, 1981.

Q: While you were getting ready to go there, what were you getting from Tanzania from the briefings and your reading and all?

MILLER: Little. Here is what happened, which was very difficult for us in the sense that Chet's nomination was put on hold by Senator Helms because Senator Helms wanted Chet to fire a career officer who was the principal deputy in the Africa Bureau at that point, Lannon Walker. Chet would not do that. He would not tell Senator Helms that he was going to name a different Principal Deputy. Over that issue he put a hold on Mr. Crocker's movement toward hearings. Now, the Miller family had already sold their home in Baltimore on the assumption that it couldn't take more than five months for confirmation. A bad judgment. We ultimately ended up living at the Kenwood Country Club in two rooms. Ambassador Negroponte was also in residence at some time with the same problem. John and his wife and Mollie and I were sitting around at Kenwood waiting to get confirmed. During that time, my wife, a linguist, went to work on Swahili and I sort of went down to the Department every day. I was able to work around the Department for three or four months.

Because Chet's nomination got held up, my nomination got held up. I got to know all the Deputy Assistant Secretaries, the office directors, and the culture of the building. And more importantly, they got to know me. You never know. Political appointees, like career officers, come in all different shades and colors and sizes. Some of them are great; some of them are catastrophic. But political appointees are almost by definition an unknown quantity. So, those three or four months around the building in which people figured out that I was not a jerk and not a crazy ideologue and in fact really liked Africa and had done a lot of work in Africa turned out to be really important. It was one of the things I've counseled new political appointees to do? try and spend as much time in the building as you can. The Foreign Service works. These are people that want to make things work. If they don't know who you are, they don't know quite how to react. It's like any other culture. GM is getting a lot of credit for bringing outsiders on to the GM system to try to reform General Motors right now. I'm sure those people are greeted with a lot of skepticism at GM headquarters. Well, your political appointee ambassador has done a lot of things that offend the career FSO and he doesn't really know it. Most importantly, the political appointee has taken a job that could have gone to a career officer. Most Foreign Service Officers know that there are going to be hundreds of competent career officers who never get to be ambassadors. Being an ambassador is not a be all and end all, but it allows you to get a seat at a nice restaurant. Being a Deputy Assistant Secretary is more important than most ambassadorial tours. But the maitre d' doesn't know that. So, if you pitch up at Nathan's and say, "I'm a Deputy Assistant Secretary," the maitre d' is going to say, "Yeah, that and five dollars will get you a good table." Well, if it's Ambassador Miller coming to dinner, that's just so swell. So, you've got to understand that when you're coming into this system, it's better to try to come in and be friends and understand that they're just a little offended by how you got there. That first three or four months allowed me to make the point that I was less of a jerk than I might have been.

Q: What was Helms after?

MILLER: He was after getting Lannon Walker removed from the job as the principal deputy, which Chet was going to do anyway in time, but he was not going to be blackmailed by Senator Helms. Chet brought in Frank Wisner but Dr. Crocker is a real statesman and one of the things about Dr. Crocker is, you do not do things that are ethically or morally wrong. It is wrong for a U.S. senator to use leverage to move a career officer. If the political appointee wants to do that, that's fine. That's up to Dr. Crocker. But it was wrong for Helms to go after Lannon that way and Chet wouldn't have it.

Q: Sometimes these moves are made because a staff member is upset. Did you get a feel for what set this off?

MILLER: No. And I went around my own loop with the Helms staff people and clearly his staff people played a very critical role. I do not know what their problems with Lannon were.

Q: What were you getting about Nyerere? Had he peaked by this time?

MILLER: No. This was our "problem." I thought it was a real opportunity. He was on his way to the Cancun summit, the only head of government from Africa among the 13 presidents at Cancun. He was the leader of the frontline states in the negotiations over Resolution 435, which was the Namibian independence resolution passed by the UN. In terms of national power at home, he was at quite a peak. Physically, he was old enough to be wise and young enough to be vigorous. He was a great guy to work with. He lived up to every expectation I had. I can't remember who had served there before me, but this chap said, "You know, there's never been an unsuccessful ambassador in Tanzania." I said, "That's wonderful." This guy said, "Nyerere makes sure that every American ambassador succeeds because he wants to have a dialogue with the United States." I couldn't have been going into a nicer job.

Q: I interviewed somebody who was going there and was worried because he said the ambassador he was replacing had had a Jesuit education and that he and Nyerere used to make quips and all that and the ambassador said, "Don't worry, he'll find a way to beat you."

MILLER: Absolutely. He was a biology teacher. He was a Jesuit. He went to Fort Hare, a university in South Africa. He was from upcountry. He had been to Cancun. Julius would find a hook somewhere like all great political leaders. He would look at you and say, "Hah! This man wants to talk about the NFL games." Julius was a great man.

Q: How about confirmation?

MILLER: It didn't amount to a hill of beans.

Q: When Crocker got in, you got in.

MILLER: Yes. You live in terror of confirmation hearings. First of all, it was held on Monday morning at 9:00. If you know the Senate, which I didn't at that time, Monday morning at 9:00? there is not a senator to be found who is awake. Nancy Kassebaum arrives in the hearing room where Ambassador Pickering (going to Nigeria). Ambassador Brown and I were waiting at the table. Nobody had turned the lights on in the Foreign Relations Committee hearing room. There was nobody there. At 9:00, Senator Kassebaum arrives, sees none of her colleagues, says, "Well, I've been told I can go ahead and have this hearing. I'll learn more if I just ask general questions about Africa. I'm really very interested in Africa. And you can just answer questions that you're interested in." Pickering and I had made the following observation. He had been in Tanzania as a junior officer. I had been in Nigeria. He spoke Swahili. I had worked for four years in Nigeria. Tom and I said, "Hey, we really ought to answer questions on each other's countries. Tom said he would be happy to talk about Tanzania, and I responded that I'd be happy to talk about the Nigerian problem." That was the first time I had met Tom Pickering, but I knew that Tom Pickering was a great player in an instant. The three of us had all of a 45-minute hearing. Nothing occurred. No problem at all. The second time confirmation came up, regarding the Zimbabwe appointment, I had no hearing at all. Senator Kassebaum called me in to her office in the Senate and said, "Everybody knows you've done a good job. I'm going to circulate your name for approval. We won't even schedule a hearing." That was the sum totals the dreaded confirmation process, allowing me to serve almost six years as an Ambassador.

Q: We'll pick this up the next time in 1981 when you go out.

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Today is February 20, 2003. Tanzania 1981. What was the situation in Tanzania as had been described to you and what you had been expecting?

MILLER: The descriptions were pretty accurate. Nyerere had been a world leader of the non-aligned movement for a long time. His economic policies were well known and the impact of his economic policies had been apparent for some period of time. In a nutshell, on the domestic front, Tanzania had succeeded in integrating itself as a political entity. At independence, there was Zanzibar and there was Tanganyika. But there was also Julius Nyerere's belief that it was important for every citizen of Tanzania to move forward roughly together economically and to integrate themselves socially and that over a period of time his approach to the economic management of Tanzania would produce a more coherent, unified country than, as he was fond of pointing out, Kenya, his next door neighbor, which was our favorite country. So, domestically, he had succeeded with a single party approach to governing Tanzania and thought that that had worked well for him. Economically it was a mess. It had not succeeded. Ujama, this approach to state socialism, had not worked well for him. The United States had been a large AID donor and so I had a large AID account and wrestled with Nyerere about the issues of domestic economic policy.

On the international front, Julius Nyerere had just returned from Cancun, where he had been with President Reagan and 11 other heads of government discussing a range of issues typically described as the north-south dialogue. Nyerere, a man of some humor, said to me when we had our first private meeting in his library in his home, "You know, I've just returned from Cancun. There was only one real ideologue at Cancun." I said, "Yes, let me guess." He said, "It was Ronald Reagan." That set the tone for three years of discussion about economic ideology and the international community, which I enjoyed immensely. He was a competent, honest, wonderful guy. He was, most importantly from a diplomatic assignment standpoint, chairman of what was then the Frontline States, a group with which we were negotiating to implement UN Resolution 435 to bring independence to Namibia, at that point Southwest Africa. On that issue, Julius and I really did disagree but had any number of candid discussions. Our approach to 435 was that we had to get the Cubans out of Angola, where they were resident in substantial numbers. We had to convince the South Africans that they would be secure in their own country as apartheid was dismantled. So, we spent a good deal of time working with the Frontline States to try to get the Cubans out of Angola, reduce the threat as the South Africans saw it, which then allowed for elections in Namibia. That worked well. Ultimately, Namibia achieved independence and apartheid came to an end in South Africa. But on the diplomatic front, Julius and I spent a lot of time talking about the tactics and strategies of trying to get Namibian independence.

Q: How did you see Nyerere as a person?

MILLER: Wonderful, warm, friendly, smart, honest, brave, humble. He was as great a head of government as Africa has seen as evidenced not by his ability to do the little day to day things of running a country but on the big accounts, the most important being his lifestyle, which remained humble throughout his whole time as head of government. Most remarkable, was his retirement from the presidency at a time when he was perfectly capable of going on physically. Then, of course, he returned to his village upcountry as one of the few heads of government in Africa who behaved the way George Washington behaved here and said, "We do not need presidents for life in Africa and I don't intend to be one." Frankly, he was probably happiest when he was back home in Butiama with his wife and grandchildren in a very humble home. It was hard to get to by vehicle. So, for me, he stands out in stark relief to the failed public leadership in Africa that can be found in almost every country.

Q: I've interviewed people who were ambassadors in Rwanda and Burundi and all this somewhat the period you were there. They would get incensed by that the Scandinavians and the United States were lavishing funds on a failed economic system and here we're trying to bring these other countries, which are more with it in American terms? You're saying the Nyerere charm worked wonders for getting support but when you get right down to it, if your country is an economic disaster, it's an economic disaster however nice a person you are.

MILLER: Well stated.

Q: How did you see it at the time?

MILLER: I think that's correct. I don't mind that argument. I think it goes like this. Julius Nyerere because of his global leadershiand this is the thing that you have to remember: nobody in their right mind today can tell you who was president of Burundi or Rwanda 20 years agJulius was an international author, an international statesman, and used that effectively as a head of government to gain support for Tanzania well beyond either its objective importance or its internal economic performance. To a great degree, that's what a head of government in a developing country ought to be trying to achieve. Julius achieved that. Then you say, "Well, did that make any sense for the United States taxpayers to support that," which as a Republican appointee is always my litmus test. The interesting thing about it is that in the world of realpolitik, the answer is yes. Here are the reasons. Zanzibar was a hotbed of extreme Marxist radicalism in the early '60s. You go there today and you can still see East German public housing projects that are appalling. Zanzibar was a real threat. We had very competent officers in Zanzibar, including Frank Carlucci and Tom Pickering.

Q: Most of them seem to get PNGed out of there.

MILLER: Yes. In fact, the story of Carlucci's being PNGed is interesting. It occurred during the national day celebrations on Zanzibar when he got on the phone with the Embassy and said, "This is really an important celebration. I want you to send a lot of big guns [some important people from the embassy staff]." That was intercepted and Carlucci was PNGed in short order over English colloquialisms. When you look at some of the things Julius did, one of them was stopping the radicalism on Zanzibar. Secondly, when somebody had to invade Uganda and get rid of the Idi Amin and his brutal regime, Julius put Tanzanian troops into that battle. Third, when we had refugees coming out of the Hutu-Tutsi disasters which were going on even back then, he volunteered a good piece of Tanzanian territory for the refugees, supported by UN money, but an awful lot of people fleeing from that conflict found refuge in Tanzania. Then the last thing on the global account is that he put aside a great deal of the country and protected it in national parks. This is really fascinating when you wonder why Julius captured the imagination of so many people. He took large pieces of Tanzania and rather than doing nothing with them, just letting them be overrun by scrub settlements and agriculture that never would have been successful, he turned them into not parks but reserve areas where there were no roads built, where people were not allowed to go in and farm. The Selous wilderness area, which has been written about in a book called "Sand Rivers," is a marvelous example of Julius saying, "Tanzania has an international trust. Even though we're poor, I intend to live up to that." The long and short of it is that those of us who were in the aid donor business kept trying to get Julius to add two and two and get four. He would always add two and two and get some other number. For example, when you got down to privatizing game lodges, the service at game lodges was poor in Tanzania. The service at game lodges in Kenya was good. Hence, Kenya got more tourists than Tanzania. So, Julius proudly announced one day that he was going to privatize some of the major game lodges. I said, "Well, Sir, I have a simple question for you. Will the workers be allowed to accept tips?" He said, "Oh, absolutely not. That would fly in the face of the socialist principle that people should be treated equally." I said, "But, Sir, in a service economy, people get tips because they perform well for the people they're taking care of." He was not able to deal with that. So, did the economy ever work perfectly? No. Did it achieve what he wanted? Yes, it did. It produced a level economic base that is now producing a solid Tanzanian economy without the disasters that befell Kenya. If Julius were here today sitting with us, he would say, "I told you, David. Kenya turned into a corrupt mud hole. Tanzania is now slowly taking off the ground with responsible leadership in a country that's socially unified." I'm happy to make that argument for him.

Q: The Germans and then the British had a fairly good coffee or tea-

MILLER: You have coffee up on the slopes of Kilimanjaro.

Q: How was this going when you were there?

MILLER: Poorly. Almost everything was going poorly. Everything was going poorly because of the following issue, Julius Nyerere gave a great speech in which he enunciated the principles of Ujama, a Swahili word for "shared ownership." Julius argued that the state should own and operate the "commanding heights of the economy." That was the phrase from that speech. It was my argument to Julius that the Chama Cha Mapindusi, the CCM, his party, had taken the doctrine of Ujama and moved economic control from the commanding heights of the economy down to the level of the local bus companies, which didn't work because government parties shouldn't be running bus companies. Julius and I spent a lot of time on the realities of implementing a program that ended up crippling things like the coffee and tea industries or the sisal industry or the cashew industry or any of a number of things because he took socialism down from "Let the government run the ports. Let the government run the rail lines." To the sad state of. "Let the government replace individual entrepreneurship and run smaller things"

Q: Could you talk a bit about Joan Wicken? I've heard that Fabian socialism was far more disastrous to Africa than Marxism. Could you talk about Nyerere's background, Joan Wicken, and the coterie around him?

MILLER: Julius was a biologist and was a biology teacher after graduating from Fort Hare in South Africa. I don't know exactly where Julius ran into Joan Wicken, but Joan was clearly out of the London School of Economics Fabian socialism group and was with Julius forever throughout his tenure as president. In fact, Joan is still alive in England and we still trade cards at Christmas and so on. There were a very other people like Joan, but Joan was the kindest Rasputin you've ever seen. The thing that was remarkable about Joan was that she, like Julius, lived the life that she espoused. Joan lived at the Salvation Army camp in Dar es Salaam. She lived in what was hardly even a private home, in a very small room or two in the Salvation Army camp, something the size of the office we're sitting in today. Unlike many ambassadors, I decided that Joan was important and interesting. I saw no reason to ignore Joan and I asked if I might pay a courtesy call on her Salvation Army camp, which I did. I think Joan found it pretty strange to see the American official car with a flag on the fender. My wife, Mollie and Joan and I became good friends. Joan and Mollie continue to exchange notes up to today. Joan was clearly, by my sense, 30 years out of date economically and was the ideological backbone to a lot of Julius' economic ideas. The reason that I came to admire Joan personally, and enjoyed working with her is that she lived her principles. The problem that I've always had with a lot of socialists was the staggering hypocrisy of their lives? presuming that they should live well but that other people should live nobly motivated by something other than greed. So as I can tell, Joan was never motivated by greed in her whole life. So, when you discussed ideas with her, you at least knew that she was doing what she believed in and I thought that was good. Her ideas were wrong. They were poor for Tanzania. But as a human being, she did what she thought was right, which is better than most people do in their lives.

Q: Did you find an influx of Fabian types from Scandinavia and from the SPD?

MILLER: Sure. We had odd people that would arrive from the London School of Economics that you thought really came from Mars and not from the LSE. But this was their hope, their dream, that Tanzania was going to work, that socialism was indeed the ideology that was closest to African traditional concepts of the common ownership of land, of consensus decision making, and many of them thought that with Nyerere they had a president of a country that would make socialism as they dreamed of it work. It obviously didn't? but they tried.

Q: How about the Swedish influence?

MILLER: There was a lot of Swedish influence, a very competent Swedish ambassador. Probably the best ambassador was a Dutch ambassador. They both had a very large aid program, as did all the Scandinavians, as did Canada, as did the United States. We were all involved in trying to figure out how to introduce a little bit more rationality in the economy. It was an outstanding diplomatic world simply because of Nyerere's presence and who he was and the importance of having Julius' support when he was head of the Non-Aligned Movement, of having Julius' support when he was running the Frontline States. When Julius Nyerere spoke or traveled, people listened to him. So, countries that were playing in that environment wanted to have a good mission in Dar es Salaam.

Q: You came out of a business background, a Republican background, under a Reagan administration-

MILLER: And I was ideologically motivated.

Q: This was early Reagan.

MILLER: How did it feel to be a Republican ideologue in King Arthur's court?

Q: Yes.

MILLER: I loved it. One of the most interesting experiences was greeting a small Senatorial delegation. The group included Paul Laxalt, who was very close to President Reagan and clearly an ideologue and Mark Hatfield, not as close to Reagan and clearly not so much an ideologue. Senator Laxalt, knowing I was a Republican appointee in Tanzania, got me in the library of the residence and said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "I'm having a wonderful time." He said, "Why would you want to come here?" I said, "Because this is where we ought to be." Let me make some sense out of that. I think that market economies work. I deeply believe that. In general, governments fail. One of the key reasons that we beat the Soviet Union was simply that a greater percentage of their economy was in the government and a lesser percentage of ours was in a government. Recognizing that there are some functions that only a government can perform, in general the governments don't do many things efficiently. But in general the more of your economy that is managed in the public sector the less rational economic management you have. I was having the time of my life in the sense of being an economics major at college and spending a lot of time in the private sector. I had an opportunity to work with one of the brightest socialists that the world had seen. He was running a country. I had an opportunity to spend a lot of time talking with him in his library about things that worked and things that didn't work. We really enjoyed each other's company. We would frequently end up with him saying, "But you care so much about people, how could you be in the Republican Party?" I'd say, "Because it works."

Q: Did he seem to understand American politics?

MILLER: Yes. He was a political master and clearly wanted to get his messages back to the administration. Although he didn't know it, he took the advice of the 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps, Al Gray, one of whose rules in life is "don't make any more enemies than you already have." Julius Nyerere knew that he didn't want the United States for any kind of an enemy. He just disagreed with President Reagan. He understood that heads of government would disagree. So we had a remarkably civilized dialogue through the veto of his candidate to be the Secretary General of the UN, though awkward times. We got along just fine.

Q: Let's talk about the veto of his candidate. Who was that?

MILLER: Salim Salim. That was really very difficult. It was a very difficult and poorly managed situation. As I was going to post, it came time for the African countries to get to nominate for the first time an African candidate to be Secretary General of the UN. They picked Salim Salim, who had been Tanzania's Ambassador to the UN. He had been Zanzibar's first Ambassador to the UN when they were independent. A remarkable man, became an ambassador at the age of 28. He had gone on to become foreign minister of Tanzania and was their nominee to be Secretary General, supported by the African group of countries. As I was going to post, Secretary of State, Alexander Haig whispered in my ear that, "oh, by the way, we were going to veto the Salim Salim candidacy." I knew that that was really going to make my opening weeks, months, or years in Tanzania very difficult. The veto occurred as I was en route to post. I arrived to present my letters of credence to a head of government whose foreign minister's public career had just gone down in flames before the world. We had just embarrassed the Organization of African Unity that was supporting Salim Salim. In general, we had made a complete diplomatic mess out of an issue where any reasonable diplomatic management would have come up with a different approach. As I went in to present my letters to President Nyerere, I said, "I hope this is a cordial meeting" because this was literally two or three weeks after this debacle and Nyerere had agreed to withdraw Salim's candidacy. It was just a terrible mess.

Q: Did you see this as the heavy hand of Jean Kirkpatrick?

MILLER: No. It was alleged to be the heavy hand of George Herbert Walker Bush, who was alleged to have become quite annoyed when (Mainland) China finally gained admission to the UN General Assembly. Salim Salim was alleged to have danced in the aisles? and it certainly looked like that in the photographic records of the event. Salim ultimately said he really didn't mean to dance in the aisles. He was going up and down shaking hands with the delegates who had supported the admission of China. Those who have reviewed the videotape say he was dancing. Those of us who know Africans well thought he was engaging in a "victory walk..." going up and down the aisle shaking hands. It probably looked like a dance to the average Caucasian. To the average African, it probably looked like an exuberant walk. That said, there was no instant replay and George Herbert Walker Bush did not like Salim Salim and that was the end of it.

That was the first time I came to understand what a fine man Nyerere was. I was young. I was inexperienced and could have easily spent a miserable time in Tanzania and been knocked off base by Nyerere. In the presentation of credentials we had a wonderful, long conversation about a ton of interesting issues, quite a substantive conversation which was out of character for the initial meeting. He obviously knew that I liked Africa a lot and we had a wonderful time. He did not bring up the Salim nomination nor did I. I left his office that day unscathed. But about three days later, a call came in requesting me come out to his beach residence and see him in the library, which is where he had all serious conversation. I looked at my DCM, David Fischer, and said, "Gosh, isn't this great? I'm getting to go out to Nyerere's home and chat in the library." David said, "I'm willing to bet you a year's pay that what you're going to hear about is Salim Salim." Of course, I did. Nyerere's take on it was that it had been horribly managed by the United States. He said, "Here we had an African candidate we all liked. If you had in any way signaled to us that Salim would not be acceptable, we would have found another candidate. We desperately wanted to have an African running the General Assembly." As it turned out that time, an African was not picked. We did not have a black African until we had Kofi Annan today. Boutros Ghali qualifies as an outstanding Egyptian. Kofi Annan has proved to be a tremendous Secretary General. There is an argument that Salim Salim would have proved to be a very effective Secretary General, but that was not to be. Nyerere was very upset that he had been embarrassed, that Salim had been embarrassed, that the OAU had been embarrassed needlessly by the incompetent diplomatic management of this account by the United States. I heard that in no uncertain terms. It's not that Julius was ever rude. Julius would not have been rude to somebody with a gun at his head. But you knew that among gentlemen, Julius was upset. And yet once that was done, that was it. This issue never stood between our friendship. The performance by Salim Salim was equally remarkable when he returned as Foreign Minister. I figured that perhaps he wouldn't be as gracious as Nyerere had been. It turned out that he was. He said that he knew clearly that I had not been involved in arguing for a veto of his candidacy, that he looked forward to working with me, and that he learned as a young man that public life was like this, that he thought he would have made a good Secretary General but it was not to be. Very much like Julius, he set about to help me, which I thought was fascinating. You have to remember what I looked like. I was 39. I had no previous diplomatic experience. I could have either been a terrible failure and embarrassed my country and myself or I could have been helpful to the people I was working with. For example, Salim Salim said to me, "You know, David, that you can hand write me a note and that's not viewed as an official transmission. If you wish to communicate with me on some issues that are troublesome but you don't want to come down and leave me with a typed message, feel free to write me a handwritten note and neither one of us will treat that as an official communication. Furthermore, my home is not far from here. Given the importance of the U.S., if you need to see me at home and you don't want people here to know, I'll have you and Mollie over to dinner very quickly. I want you to know my wife. If you need to see me, come knock on the door at home and tell them you want to come see me." We developed a great relationship. Another example involved the air conditioner in his office. The air conditioner in his office didn't work? and it was made by an American manufacturer. We had similar air conditioners in the mission. I said, "You know, Sir, I can fix your air conditioner." He said, "Yes, and it would probably broadcast all the way to Zanzibar." I said, "Well, you'd have to take it apart to find the transmitter." He said, "Yes, but it's so hot in here I'm going to take the chance." So, we got along fine. We laughed about everything in the world. Of course, he went on to head the OAU. I've seen him recently in meetings. We get along great.

Q: Speaking of this, I've talked to other people who served as ambassadors to Tanzania and Nyerere would consult with the Americans. They would have this relationship. Since Nyerere was off on almost a different track on the socialist non-aligned, why was he giving so much time to the Americans?

MILLER: He wanted us to represent him effectively in Washington, which we all did. He had a position on the world that's like Pat Moynihan? he was first and foremost an intellectual and an ideologue. Pat was accidentally a senator, a White House staffer, a professor at Harvard. Pat could have sat in a cornfield in lowa and talked to people about the world and it would have been wonderful. Julius Nyerere was an intellect. He wanted to talk to people about his ideas and what worked and didn't work. The American ambassador was somebody that could act as an amplifier for his views and a contributor to new ideas. So, as somebody said to me when I had not gotten to post, I was, of course, worried about getting along with the president of Tanzania, they said, "Are you kidding? Nyerere will find some way to relate to you. He finds a way to relate to everybody. He loves talking to American ambassadors." That proved to be the case. And he did it because it was fun. He wanted us to know that he thought in the long run his system was going to be okay.

Q: You said your DCM was David Fischer. Did he or anybody else when you would come back from these meetings with Nyerere say, "Okay, let's get out of the clouds?" Did you find that anybody on your staff was concerned about the Nyerere charm?

MILLER: No. One, because everybody had been charmed. Two, because while half of the messages were transmittable, half of the exchanges were simply an intellectual dialogue. So, when you'd get that, you'd simply sit down with the DCM or the political officer or the station chief and say, "Hey, Julius is really interested in x, y, and z today. Didn't say anything worth sending back to Washington."

There were some times he just wanted to talk. The best illustration of Julius as an intellectual partner involved organic agriculture and Rodale Farm and Press in Emmaus, Pennsylvania. Bob Rodale and his family were the pioneers in organic agriculture in the United States. Before we went to post, my dear wife, Mollie, who has been very active in studying organic farming and sustainable agriculture, drove us up to Emmaus, Pennsylvania, and we bought what must have been 50 books from the Rodale library. We shipped all those books over to Tanzania. When we got there and my wife got to know the president, she concluded that he would enjoy some of these books because he was a biologist and he cared about agriculture. So, she sent him a few of the books on sustainable agriculture. That resulted in a meeting about two weeks after that in which my AID director was called out to the library at Julius' house and the president said to him, "See these books on organic agriculture? They come from Mrs. Miller. Why aren't you doing that here in the country?" Well, my AID director was appalled, stunned, upset, and off the roof because he was a fairly traditional AID program manager. He got me on the phone and said, "What's your wife doing?" I said, "She's exchanging ideas with her friend, Julius Nyerere." He said, "This is outrageous. He's telling me I'm supposed to get out of dry land farming with these giant tractors. He wants to do sustainable organic agriculture." He was quite upset. But I said to Mollie, "I tell you what. You go out and see the president." So, she went out to see the president. He said, "I want to have Bob Rodale come to Tanzania and talk about sustainable agriculture at the Morogoro Agricultural College." The first result was that our AID mission sort of announced that they would boycott that whole thing. Then Mollie talked to Bob Rodale and he said, "Of course I'll come out to Tanzania." Julius Nyerere then opined to me in a moment of truth, "Organic farming is no different than what the Africans have done for the last 3,000 years. In the last 20 years, all of your AID missions have been here telling us that we have to use these giant tractors and all this fertilizer. We can neither afford the fertilizer nor the tractors. But we clearly can use animal manure, bring it in, use it for compost, collect and keep the animals. But most importantly, if I got up and said that my citizens would think that I was going backwards and that this was not a world-class approach to agriculture. But if Mr. Rodale comes here and we have a big seminar, then my citizens will think that the United States thinks that organic farming is a good idea and that's why we're having Mr. Rodale." I said, "That's really good." We literally had this wonderful program at this agricultural college. It was just terrific. Bob Rodale came out, talked about organic farming, and organized a lot of test plots. I have not a clue what the long-run impact has been, but he had the Chama Cha Mapindusi, all the district people came in to learn about this, were sent back out to talk to people to say, "This is a responsible way to farm." Because of my wife's involvement and the involvement of a minister in Tanzania named Gertrude Mongala, we raised a number of interesting issues. For example, the length of the handles of farm instruments. The AID programs were all run by men and administered by men and the implements were designed by men, but as you know, in Africa, the people that do the farming are the women. So my wife and Gertrude Mongala were going through the agenda for the meeting and they looked at all these implements and said, "Here we go again. We're getting hoes that have 5-foot handles and that's all wrong. They should be shorter and easier for the women to use." So, not only did we get into organic farming but we got into the fact that women ought to be involved in the design of agricultural implements and guys ought to stop buying instruments that were good for them for the two hours that they hoed as a test before they sent 10,000 hoes out to the countryside, all but one of which would have been used by an African woman. It was a wonderful thing.

Q: Let's go on to foreign policy. Before we get on to African policy, the period you were there was the height of our engagement in Central America, which was arousing the wrath of all the left around the world. This was on the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, the civil war in El Salvador. How did that play with Nyerere in Tanzania?

MILLER: Not as much as you might think. It played more with Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, as I was to learn during my tour in Harare. Nyerere in some ways was Afro centric. While he had been very active in the non-aligned movement and made a lot of pronouncements about north-south inequality and so on, he understood that his political capital was nowhere near as valuable outside of Africa as it was inside Africa. So, we really did not spend much time on issues outside of Africa. Robert Mugabe, in contrast, was quite upset about our Central American policy. Julius was very upset that we saw the Cubans in Angola as a greater threat more than our support for Jonas Savimbi. Julius did not believe that the whites in South Africa really perceived that Samora Machel in Mozambique, and the Angolans, led by Dos Santos and so on, would be such a threat that we couldn't unwind apartheid until we convinced the Afrikaaners that they weren't going to be overwhelmed by this group of African Marxists on their border. So, the ideological dialogue about Marxism, non-Marxism, Cubans, non-Cubans, etc., occurred very much in the context of southern Africa.

Q: You had spent Ph.D. time and business time? You had been involved with Africa for some time. What about the Reagan administration coming in and talking about constructive engagement? Did you see this as being something constructive or did you feel that this was an excuse for supporting the white government?

MILLER: Oh, heavens no. I wouldn't have supported an apartheid government. And neither would Dr. Crocker. The concept was that you could not beat the Afrikaaners out of the rat hole into which they had crawled. Rather, you had to induce the Afrikaaners into the sunlight, and I think that proved to be correct. They are quite independent, difficult, strong-minded people. That's how they survived and prospered. Dr. Crocker was a remarkable statesman who will never get the kind of credit that Nelson Mandela will for bringing about the end of apartheid in South Africa with no bloodshed. But Chet understood that with luck he would have an 8-year run with George Shultz to unwind the problems in Southern Africa with a minimum of violence. That was achieved. That was quite remarkable. The fundamental construct was that at the time that Dr. Crocker took over the account, there were a very substantial number of Cuban troops in Angola, perhaps something in the range of 20,000 Cubans. And Samora Machel in Mozambique, on the other side of South Africa, was clearly a socialist. While there weren't as many armed troops in Mozambique there were an awful lot of intel types from East Germany and so on. When you were a white South African and who had been fed a dose of "the ANC is a communist front" and the communist side of the ANC, the African National Congress, was run by Joe Slovo, a white South African, and you got to be very, very defensive. And that led to a defense of racial supremacy as the only way to defend yourself. The only way to get the South Africans to release, to give up, control over the military in their country would be to say, "We will make your neighborhood benign. We are going to set out to make it so that you can worry about your internal problems" and that's what we did. So, I thought that Constructive Engagement worked quite well. I was opposed to economic sanctions on South Africa. I think that was a bad decision. But you had to have been deeply involved in the issue to understand that. I had already been talking with the young Nationalist Party politicians about the fact that apartheid was going to come to an end because young whites in South Africa saw the world changing. So, you knew apartheid was coming to an end, but a patient approach was hard to defend. It was very hard to defend the orderly demise of something that is on the face of it a moral disaster of many, many years. Yet to produce a functioning society at the other end without violence, without a lot of deaths, with a functioning economy which would allow the ANC to come in and take over a very advanced country, took tremendous intellectual stamina and courage. Crocker's children were picketed at Sidwell Friends. He was, of course, described as being some horrible racist. This is a man who has devoted his entire life into working on African issues, still does. He knew that the way to end apartheid without violence was to create the right stage, which he did. It took a lot of patience.

Q: Were you the carrier of messages? Were we asking things of Nyerere?

MILLER: Sure.

Q: What sort of things?

MILLER: The messages were all around the basic theme. The message never changed much. Dos Santos is a frontline mate of yours and Machel is a frontline mate of yours and so on. As long as Dos Santos has 20,000 combat trained Cubans in Angola, we're going to have a hard time getting the South Africans to implement Resolution 435. The obvious dialogue that went on for years was, of course, Julius would reply that if you got Savimbi to do less, then you could have fewer Cubans. Savimbi was a very hard account to manage. Sam Njomo, who came out of the bush to become Namibia's first president, also made a lot of pronouncements that weren't very helpful when you were trying to convince everybody here in Washington that Sam would be a good president, which he has largely become. Sam Njomo has been a very responsible president. But back to the question, " What were you doing with Julius? " You were trying to get these messages across to Julius. For example, you would show Julius examples of satellite photography of Angola. And then point out that the overhead photography keeps turning up baseball diamonds all over Angola. We know that they're Cubans playing baseball. And the South Africans are going to know they're Cubans playing baseball. They're going to continue to send their troops illegally through Namibian territory into Angola. We're going to continue to have a war. We're going to continue to slaughter each other. We have a policy that will lead to this ending," which we did. So, your basic message with Julius was to get your points across and listen to Julius saying, "If Savimbi keeps doing blank, there's a problem. If the South Africans keep sending covert raids into Dar es Salaam, you are going to have a problem. We had covert South African activities running around in the region. That was bad. You were trying to get these two sides to disengage and trust each other.

Q: Did the white South African government have any representation in Dar es Salaam?

MILLER: The first time I really saw an official was in Harare. They had a trade office in Harare. In Dar I don't think they had anybody official. But everybody was trying to do what we should be trying to do on the Iraq account today and that is, to defuse a situation. The problem in Southern Africa was like almost all others in the world. If you listen long enough, you will find some common room to move the ball forward, hence Dr. Crocker's term Constructive Engagement. So I basically sat there and said, "If we in the United States are helpful and if the frontline states are helpful and if the South Africans are helpful, we can unwind this thing without a disaster." That was my job and that's what happened.

Q: How did you react to the resignation under pressure of Alexander Haig and the arrival of George Shultz? What was your feeling and that of the embassy?

MILLER: It made little or no difference. Frankly, the only thing that made any difference to me was that George Shultz and Chet Crocker were then and are now best of friends. Secretary Shultz gave Dr. Crocker all the backing in the world for the whole run. That was important to us that we had a Secretary who understood what we were trying to do and stuck with it throughout all the political difficulties in the United States. He understood where we were going. We had bad times in the United States politically and good times in the United States politically.

Q: Did you find statements in Congress? Were they for the most part helpful or unhelpful? Were you trying to put out fires?

MILLER: No.

Q: I think Nyerere was sophisticated enough to understand the players in Washington.

MILLER: Sure. We had no flaps whatsoever. It just was not like Zimbabwe. We really just had no difficulties at all.

Q: How about the Black Caucus in Congress? Did they appear at all?

MILLER: No, not much. The thing to remember is, I have a very strange history. John Lewis and I started working together when John was not too long out of SNCC and I was living in Bedford Stuyvesant. I had some credibility with black congressmen from the outset.

Q: John Lewis being what?

MILLER: The now Congressman Lewis, but at one point head of the Student Non-Violence Coordinating Committee before he lost out to Stokley Carmichael, who came into SNCC with a much more violent approach. I still see John today. I hired John at Westinghouse as a consultant in 1972. As soon as I got there, I was asked to work on the issues of race relations in Westinghouse. So I called John and said, "We've got a lot of problems with black and white folks in Westinghouse. Do you think you can come up and lend us a hand?" That is one of the things that has allowed me to be as direct and candid as I have working with Africa. The little house in Bedford-Stuyvesant that gave me the background to work with both blacks and whites? and of course many senior black leaders knew of my background.

Q: Was there any racial feeling in Nyerere or his government or his country?

MILLER: I don't think so. As some of my friends will tell you, I'm probably as oblivious to some things as anybody you'll ever meet. Somebody has to work pretty hard to convince me that there are racists before I go looking for it. I've always felt that if you reached out to people and presumed they were decent, that seems to induce decent behavior on the part of many people. I never had any racial problems in Tanzania. Clearly when we got down to Zimbabwe there were problems of race. There had been a war in Zimbabwe between blacks and whites. There was still some tension there. I had only one black officer. I went back to the Department and said, "It would be a little helpful to me if I could get another black officer." I had one black guy, Jim Spit, who was a colonel in the Army. In one meeting when we were discussing racial tensions, Jim piped up and said, "I don't have any problem getting along with people here." I said, "I think there's a message here, folks." This is a country in which race was important. This was six years after a black-white war. But in Tanzania, there had been few whites even during the colonial period.

Q: How did you find the role of women?

MILLER: For an African society, it was quite progressive. The CCM had a lot of women in positions of leadership. In that sense, it was better than "average." In general, women in Africa are not treated as well as any American would expect they should be. I've never quite understood that, but that's certainly the way it is. In those days, we really did not have any programs targeted to that issue, leaving out things like maternal and child health care, which was obvious then and is obvious today. You have a terrible infant mortality rate that you're wrestling with and you lose way too many mothers in childbirth.

Q: What was home life, social life, for you all?

MILLER: It was our first diplomatic post. There was a period of time in which it was exciting, odd, and different to be entertaining officially for the United States. That was fun. My wife worked very, very hard at that at that assignment? and its importance should not be underestimated. Before going out to post, she found both books on protocol. There were only two books on protocol in the world. There is the United States book and there's a British book. She bought those. Going to cooking classes and just making sure that we did everything right. That was fun for a period of time. After a while, as you know, it becomes a little tiresome. For the family, they had been in Nigeria for four years and so to the kids it was another international school in Dar es Salaam which was not a particularly good school. But the Embassy obviously brought a lot of extra excitement. It was fun for them to have the Marines around. It was fun for them to go to the Marine Ball as little kids. It was fun for them when they got old enough to try to run some of the physical fitness tests, some of the PFT stuff, for the kids. I think that was probably the most enjoyable time for the family because everything was new and exciting and different. Frankly, by the time we got to the last year in Zimbabwe, we had done enough entertaining and enough dinners and we had had enough of dealing with the house staff issues.

Q: How did the island of Zanzibar play?

MILLER: Not a lot. Zanzibar in my mind loomed two or three different ways. We started our initial Peace Corps program in Zanzibar. When I got to post they were coming back our direction so we were reaching out to them again. We had a home in Zanzibar, so we'd get out there and work. Zanzibar was the home of the first U.S. diplomatic mission to East Africa, with our first officer arriving in something like 1822. Some poor chap from Boston sat out there pretty far from home.

Q: He ended up as a deckhand. He set up his treaty with Muscat to include Zanzibar.

MILLER: That's right. We had some of the Gulf fiefdom principalities working on Zanzibar. We had an old, old building in the old part of Zanzibar which amazingly enough, we managed to lease for our AID program in Zanzibar. So, we had the same building that the chap pitched up in 1822 or 1823.

But there was a Peace Corps program that was important to us. There was a malaria eradication program that we were sponsoring. We worked a lot on trying to get the incidence of malaria down. Then we had political leadership of Zanzibar that was a little bit different than the political leadership of Tanzania, not at the government level but at the working level. So, you wanted to get out there and look at textile factories and other economic development programs. For example, tourism, a terrific opportunity that they should have been hitting the ball out of the park on and they were doing nothing, a small national park that should have been attractive that was not. The Zanzibaris would want you to come out and say, "Why don't we get more of your aid money? Why don't we see more of you? Why don't you have officers stationed out here permanently? Why don't you speak Swahili better? This is our native tongue." That was about the whole account other than the fact that I found out that as a former Westinghouse employee the archives of Zanzibar were collapsing - literally, the papebecause all the air conditioners had broken and they were all Westinghouse. It was the first time I sent a rocket back to Pittsburgh corporate headquarters in the diplomatic post saying, "Equipment is broken. Please send replacements." So my old boss, Tom Murrin called and said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Tom, all the air conditioners are stopped. The Zanzibar archives are falling apart." He said, "What do you need?" Westinghouse shipped out air conditioners. They stood up to the plate and hit the ball.

Q: Did the neighboring countries play much of a role? Was there any Hutu-Tutsi problem or Uganda or Kenya?

MILLER: Tanzania had closed the border with Kenya for a while. We had tensions between Presidents Moi and Nyerere. When I crossed the border, frequently there were only diplomats crossing the border. A lot of smuggling was going on. It was just a tense time. The two countries were not getting along. I can't even recall all the issues. The things that were sticking in people's craws at the time were an unfair allocation of tourist revenues, the smuggling of goods from one country to another and not paying duties on them. Those were the larger issues. It was classic. It was unproductive for both countries and it got resolved. It did acquaint me with one of the most ingenious programs of smuggling I have ever heard of. That is, in Arusha, there was an American company that had a very small tire plant, a plant of which the Tanzanians were very proud. Kenya had a shortage of tires. The group that crossed the border up there were Masai, but if you were caught smuggling tires it was a problem. So, the Masai tied the tires onto their animals and they turned their animals loose on one side of the border and the animals generally wandered across to the other side of the border, where the Masai collected the tires from their cattle. If the animals were caught, it wasn't anybody's fault. It was quite an ingenious scheme. I was very impressed with the Masai.

Q: How about Uganda?

MILLER: Things were okay. There was some violence up there. Things still were not perfect. We sent some of the Marines up there to augment the Marine security guard detachment in Kampala. But we didn't do a lot of regional stuff in general.

Q: You left there when?

MILLER: Sometime in '84. I went down to Zimbabwe?

Q: You were in Zimbabwe from when to when?

MILLER: I think 1984 to 1986.

Q: How did your Zimbabwe appointment come about?

MILLER: This wonderful man here, Bob Fraser, who's picture is sitting on the table next to me, was one of the Crocker cohort of five or so key advisors who were Chet's kitchen cabinet in implementing Constructive Engagement. He later died. That's why his picture's here. He worked for me at the NSC before his death. At the point that I was being considered for Zimbabwe, he was in the embassy in London running the African account for us. So, I would see him all the time transiting London. He was a very competent officer and a wonderful personal friend. One evening in Dar es Salaam there was a party going on when the phone rang. The staff said it was Secretary Crocker. When I got on the phone, Chet said, "How would you like to go to Zimbabwe?" I sort of said, "Well, that would be fine. Why do you want me to do that?" He said, "Well, I can't go into all of it here, but I want you to get back here and talk to me a little bit about the problems with Robert Mugabe and so on." So, I said, "Fine." Shortly thereafter, I arranged to get back to Washington and talk to Chet and I transited London. I sat down and talked to my dear friend, Fraser, and he said, "You really want to be ambassador to Zimbabwe?" I said, "I think so. I think that would be fun." He said, "Now you understand that Dr. Crocker hasn't a clue about how the Foreign Service works or how people really get appointed to anything. If you want the job, I'll get you the job, but remember, Chet should not know anything about what I am doing." I said, "Jeez, Bob, that's okay with me." He said, "By the way, you've got four more hours before you've got to catch your plane. I've always wanted to introduce you to the DCM here, Ray Sykes." I said, "Great." So, we walked down the hallway and walked into Mr. Sykes' office. We had a wonderful conversation. And Mr. Sykes said, "I understand you're in Tanzania." We talked about Africa. I walked out of the office and Bob said, "Now, I want you to understand why I did that." I said, "Why?" He said, "Mr. Sykes is the career officer that they're considering to go to Zimbabwe." I said, "Oh. So why did you set me up with him?" He said, "Mr. Sykes has a heart problem. He's not going to go to Zimbabwe. But I wanted him to know that you're a good guy and that you understand Africa so the career side of the shop doesn't say, Miller? What is this all about? Political appointees aren't supposed to go to two posts." So, Fraser set out to assure those who would have stood in my way. While it was Chet that made the critical decision to send me on to Zimbabwe, it was Fraser along with some help from Frank Wisner who really greased the skids for the appointment.

Q: Before you went to Zimbabwe, what were you hearing?

MILLER: That it was awful, terrible. I visited Harare once with Ambassador Wisner, who was at that point either the ambassador in Zambia or had gone back to be Crocker's principal deputy. But we had a fine career officer in Zimbabwe, Bob Keeley, who was sent out as our first ambassador to Zimbabwe after independence. Bob went to Princeton and was a Greek major. He was really an EUR kind of player and ended up as our ambassador in Greece. Keeley took all that intellectual competence and ran head on into Bob Mugabe. As you might suspect? Frank and I had Keeley alone at his residency saying, "I'm going to kill the man if you leave me here another six months. Robert Mugabe is going to be strangled by the American ambassador." So I had a fairly good sense of the fact that this was going to be a pretty grim assignment. That said, I thought that the theory made sense. That was, Ambassador Keeley and I are just about anti-matter to each other. Keeley was a straight protocol conscious very intellectually competent career officer who did everything right. I don't want to contrast myself with all those characteristics, but generally I was a bon vivant political appointee close to the political powers in Washington, a great deal less formal than Ambassador Keeley. The theory was that if Bob didn't work, maybe Dave would work. That proved to be fallacious. That was really a dumb idea. But we all set out with high hopes that if you approached Mugabe as a friend and as somebody who would listen carefully to the likes of Julius Nyerere, I could listen to a lot of Bob Mugabe. That's what happened.

Q: You mentioned your political connections. Did you ever use them or did they ever come into play while you were in Tanzania?

MILLER: They did not in Tanzania. They came in more to play during the tour in Zimbabwe. About halfway through Zimbabwe, Dr. Crocker asked me to come back and run what was then called the South Africa Working Group, which was an effort to explain constructive engagement both on the Hill and among White House types that were skeptical. So there, my political ties were of help. But not really at post. Any ambassador who's in Dar es Salaam or Harare that thinks he ought to be in touch with any person of political stature sufficient to be of any use to you at post ought to have his or her head cut off because that ain't how the system works. It is dangerous to launch little forays into Washington without understanding what's going on. When you're at post, that's not your assignment.

Q: Where did things stand in Zimbabwe?

MILLER: Lancaster House had set the terms of independence. What was going on?

Q: Yes.

MILLER: Things were a mess.

Q: But there had already been the settlement?

MILLER: Yes. We were four years into the integration of the armed forces. We were four years into ZANU and ZAPU trying to get along. Ian Smith was in parliament so you had this sort of old Rhodesian group still quite active in there. Joshua Nkomo was still working out of Bulawayo and was still Mugabe's political enemy. They really didn't like each other. Most importantly from our standpoint the internal war between ZANU and ZAPU, which is to say the Shona and the N'Debele, was still quite active. We had three young American tourists who were kidnaped and murdered by an unnamed group of terrorists in the south on the road going to Victoria Falls. We had many of the schools that we built burned by one side or the other. So, if you look at the domestic side of what I was trying to do there, I spent a great deal of time trying to rebuild schools that had been burned. I spent a good deal of time on television there, which was different than Tanzania, trying to make the point that the United States did not approve of violence by any party or any group. Because of television, I got to do a great deal of speaking once the television network figured out that I would give speeches or ask them to come along to a burned out school where you appeared to give a school district money to rebuild. I was deeply involved in all of the stuff that has now, frankly, failed.

Q: How well has the Mugabe government taken hold?

MILLER: Pretty firmly. But he had two critical appointees in the cabinet that were white. The secretary of agriculture, Dennis Norman, was white. The head of the Civil Service Commission, Anderson, was white. The head of his internal intelligence service, Dan Stannard, was white, as was a holdover from the Ian Smith government, quite remarkable. He had some N'Debele around him but not many.

Q: This was one of the tribal groups.

MILLER: Yes. Zimbabwe basically has two tribal groups. The predominant group, Robert Mugabe's group, the ZANU, was the Shona. The N'Debele are in the south from Bulawayo toward the South African border and they are related to the Zulu. It's a wonderful place. Cecil Rhodes is buried in the Motopos wilderness area down there in N'Debele territory.

Q: How about Mugabe? Still today, he's considered one of the premier disasters of Africa.

MILLER: That is correct. He is one of the premier disasters of Africa. He's earned that title by pure hard work and dedication to horrible national leadership.

Q: How was he viewed at that time?

MILLER: As an impending premier disaster of Africa. He showed all of the characteristics that really led to the disaster that occurred. He was very arrogant, very isolated in many ways, did not know how to use the diplomats that were stationed there, was just an outrageous critic of the United States. We were the largest aid donor to Zimbabwe at that time. I'm pleased to say that I recommended that we terminate the aid program, which we did shortly after President Carter visited and walked out on a national day speech in which the United States was vilified. You could see the beginning of the end coming even then. But it was very hard to convince people of that. I really failed to carry the message of how bad it was going to get.

Q: You were put there to be the antithesis of Keeley.

MILLER: Right.

Q: Did you go out with a shoeshine and a smile on your face and ready to deal with this guy?

MILLER: Sure.

Q: How did it work?

MILLER: Terribly. He had no interest in working with anybody from the United States, let alone an American diplomat. He just had no idea really what ambassadors did. He didn't really know how to use his own ambassadors. He didn't know how to relate to us as a diplomatic corps. We literally got together and talked about this among all of us in the diplomatic corps. He would launch off on commentary about somebody's country or without calling an ambassador in. It was just absolute diplomatic chaos. Maybe that shouldn't be surprising because these guys did not inherit a functioning government. They really went through the civil war with the Smith government. Many of the people then who had worked for the Smith government left. This was not much more than four years away from the end of a revolutionary war.

Q: We are going to stop at this point. We're in 1984, just beginning to talk about Mugabe. I take it you didn't want to strangle Mugabe like Keeley did.

MILLER: I didn't strangle him either, but I only lasted two years. Keeley lasted four. If I had gone four, I probably would have strangled him, too. Keeley was a great ambassador. There was absolutely nothing wrong with him. I had foolish hopes, as did Dr. Crocker that maybe there was some way to work with this guy.

Q: We'll talk about dealing with Mugabe and the situation during the time you were there and also your relationship with other ambassadors, the international community dealing with Mugabe's coterie, and the whites and the white farmers.

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Today is May 5, 2003. What was the situation when you arrived in Zimbabwe and what did you set yourself out to do?

MILLER: The situation was still one of some optimism that a civil war had come to an end, that the Lancaster House accords had produced an agreement that seemed pretty reasonable. There was a functioning parliament in which sat some different parties and some powerful people. Joshua Nkomo was still very active with ZAPU primarily an N'Debele or southern-based group. And we, the United States, were the largest aid donors. We had a very well run AID program that was doing quite a good job. So, there was at that point some cause for optimism for the country. With regard to my assignment, there was some hope that perhaps a change of face or a change of style or whatever would ease Robert Mugabe's concerns about the United States and allow us to work more constructively with him. As will come out over the length of this conversation, that failed but I certainly approached him with my usual enthusiasm and hopes that overwhelming friendliness would overcome a man who fought his way to power from the bush.

Q: This does show something that goes on from time to time within the assignment process. That is, to try to get the right person into the job, sometimes particularly if the country is important, to get a relationship, and particularly some of the countries the relationship is important, I don't think it makes a hell of a lot of difference who is ambassador in London or Paris because that's taken care of at a higher level. But when you're talking about a Zimbabwe or a Korea, you're talking about a different element.

MILLER: Absolutely. That's a key observation and it's one that, for example, Secretary Kissinger tends to have missed his entire life. It is indeed feasible to work with the government in Bonn or in London directly from Washington so that the personality of the ambassador is less important. For medium-to-smaller countries, the personal relationship between the ambassador and the head of government and then in the larger sense among the leadership community in a country as small as Zimbabwe and the ambassador's personality is important. During my tenure, there were five or ten key leaders under Mugabe that were very important to us. I managed to get along with most of them. Whether they agreed with us ideologically or not? But frankly in a personal sense I never got along with Mugabe. That inability to work with him as far as I know has been maintained by all the succeeding American ambassadors.

Q: If Mugabe was turning out to be a problem for you, sometimes one can deal with the equivalent to a chief of staff or key figures within somebody's administration. Were you searching around to do that?

MILLER: Oh, quite. When I got there, the key players were Bernard Chidzaro who was Minister of Finance and an outstanding individual who went on to assume a senior position in the UN structure. There was another chap named Dennis Norman who was the minister of agriculture. Bernard was black. Dennis was white. Then we had a chap named Anderson who was the head of the civil service. He was white. The head of the internal security service, Dan Stannard, was an old Irish cop who stayed on. That was important for us because we did have some Americans killed. The leadership in the private sector at that point was equally God. C.G. Tracey was head of one of the major banks in Zimbabwe. John Lorrie was head of the Commercial Farmers Union. All were part of a collection of national leadership that if Bob Mugabe had not proved to be so effectively stubborn would have guided Zimbabwe through quite a nice transition from inequitable land ownership and a history of discrimination against blacks through a 20-or-30 year process where Zimbabwe today would be quite prosperous and successful and multiracial.

Q: How did you see the black-white divide in the country at that time?

MILLER: I thought quite good. There is a great advantage to having had an armed struggle. We arrived four years after the end of the armed conflict. Both blacks and whites had stories about being on different sides of the conflict. I think the fact that they went through that violence helped them appreciate the peace. I think it led both sides to say, "We really ought to work together because we don't want to do this again." I had this conversation with lots of blacks and lots of whites, which is the advantage of really being an outsider that people want to talk to. I thought the race relations were quite good. Frankly, I suspect that the race relations in Zimbabwe still are quite good, leaving out the organized thuggery of the executive branch of the government. Blacks and whites in Zim got along quite well.

Q: One of the key elements even today is the white industrial farmers.

MILLER: The white industrial farmers are organized into a commercial farmers union. That is the organization of predominantly white large farmers. As I left, there were an increasing number of blacks who were qualifieso many hectares and so fortbut quite small in terms of the total membership of the CFU. That must have been something in the range of 3,000 people. Very sophisticated farming. The world's second highest output of maize or corn per hector attracted an investment from H.J. Heinz in edible oils. There was research done in one of the U.S. corn manufacturing companies in hybrid corns. It was a sophisticated, well-run system but it had what is in hindsight, the fatal flaw?land distribution. Indeed when Cecil Rhodes arrived and the whites began to seize land, they seized the most productive land and left the indigenous black population on poorer lands scattered around the country in marginal areas.

Q: Was there any effort to rationalize this during the time you were there?

MILLER: Well, I think the whites knew that this was a situation that couldn't stand. That said, I believe that they felt that the rational approach was over time training black farmers to acquire the skills necessary to administer what are really large agribusinesses. Some of that went well. Some of that did not do well. But if you had pushed the Commercial Farmer Union members, they would say they tried to reach out and it was going slowly. Viewed from the perspective of the blacks, it was going too slowly. Had you waited for this process to occur in natural evolution, it would have taken a very long period of time. What the Mugabe government failed to do was to produce a compromise that could have been endorsed by the Commercial Farmers Union and by leading black farmers to produce a more rapid transfer of land ownership without jeopardizing the export of tobacco and edible oils and many other items that the Zimbabweans grew that produced the great bulk of their balance of payments.

Q: Was the Mugabe government doing anything in this field while you were there?

MILLER: Not much really. There was not much movement in that area. It is unclear to me why they could not focus on that more. Our AID program focused on that quite aggressively. That is, training black farmers, making sure that black farmers were paid fairly for their grain output every year. We developed and funded a way to weigh grain bags in an autonomous system, thus avoiding corruption. Then the payments to the farmers were made through the commercial banking system. This is just one example of a lot of things we did to encourage output from the black areas, to get more capital in the black areas, which would then presumably allow them to prosper in the agricultural area and ultimately solve this issue.

Q: Was there an agreement to let you do this or was there interference?

MILLER: No interference at all. Presumably there was an agreement because the AID programs had to be discussed. I presume that Dennis Norman, Minister of Agriculture, thought it was a smashing idea.

Q: It sounds like the Mugabe government at the core had these qualified people who were doing their thing, but the core was in stasis?

MILLER: The core was Robert Mugabe. That's the problem. But there were of course, a coterie of actors that weren't very helpful. There was a chief of staff in the army that was probably not the best military leader in Africa. There was an attorney general that was a self-professed Marxist. There were some others who already evidenced some signs of sufficient corruption and dishonesty to be troublesome. They were both stars in the Mugabe administration and there were already signs of some dry rot in the ship that ultimately led to the mess we're in.

Q: How about your relations with Washington? Were they saying, "Okay, Mr. Congeniality, we want this and that?"

MILLER: Yes. That's a fair question. The hopes that Washington had and the hopes that I had were simply not realized. That's a fair statement. We had Mugabe coming in to be the head of the Non-Aligned Movement. We really did want to get along with him. The difficulties really stem from the following. First of all, Robert Mugabe was a guerilla leader from the bush. When he was head of government, he wore nice suits, but he pursued a brutal path to power which either left him scarred or he brought to the table the skills necessary to succeed in that kind of a struggle, which means he was a pretty tough fellow. And he was treated pretty badly by the forces of Ian Smith during that struggle. Secondly, because he had no experience running any government of any size, he had no concept of how to use an ambassador. In fact, I found myself, when I had the opportunity, trying to discuss with him not a particular issue but a procedure of how you work with other countries and what you might tell an ambassador to try to get a positive reaction from his or her country. Then I think that frankly Mugabe was sufficiently intellectually isolated for whatever reason that what you see today was a man who was already showing signs of isolation from any other reasonable outside force and when you tried to talk to him about issues he saw the world in fairly rigid ideological terms. He had no sense of humor, which is a terrible thing.

Q: Oh, a terrible thing.

What were the influences on him? What was his view then?

MILLER: I think he thought that the United States was unhelpful to put it most politely, that constructive engagement was a sham and would not achieve what it professed, which was Namibian independence and an end to apartheid. I think he was deeply skeptical of President Reagan and whether we weren't simply a racist government. He saw that manifested in some of our policies in Central America. And of course, he never got over the lack of support from the United States during his struggle for majority rule in Zimbabwe. So, his view of me and the society that I represented was one of fairly profound skepticism and hostility.

Q: Did Ian Smith play any role at this point?

MILLER: He was there. I had the opportunity to chat with him. I think he's a terribly nice man if you accept his world view, which was not acceptable. He was a brave fellow. He stayed in the country, he stayed in the parliament, he remained a critic of the government that was pretty hard nosed at times with its critics. He deeply loved Rhodesia and its people. Frankly, he deeply loved Zimbabwe. He is a true African who is accidentally Caucasian. That said, he wasn't particularly relevant to anything that was going on.

Q: Were there any overt or covert groups in the country that were evident that wanted to succeed Mugabe or put him out or something?

MILLER: No, none that I could determine. We had some continued ZANU-ZAPU tensions on the fault line down around Bulawayo. We had schools burned and we had the army killing occasional insurgents in that area, which was sort of the leftover of the ZANU-ZAPU struggle for who was going to control the government. But I would see Joshua Nkomo in my office, tried to get Nkomo and Mugabe together on occasion under our tutelage in hopes of producing a bit more of the reconciliation there. But no, there were no groups dedicated to overthrowing the government. To elucidate a bit on that, we did worry about South African incursions. The SADF [South African Defense Forces] had a pretty robust covert capability that we tried to be mindful of and to let the South Africans know that using that capability was not in anybody's interest. We succeeded pretty well with that.

Q: You mentioned some Americans were killed.

MILLER: Yes.

Q: What was that about?

MILLER: We had three American tourists who were on the road from Bulawayo to Victoria Falls. They were taken hostage by a group of these armed bandits left running around in the ZAPU area. That occurred right at the end of Ambassador Keeley's tour. As Ambassador Keeley was leaving the country, we had not been able to locate these three youngsters after what was then three or four months of imprisonment. So, I met with the parents here. If I remember correctly, they were from the West Coast, either Washington or Oregon. As it turned out, we discovered their bodies roughly eight months after I had been at post. They had been killed very quickly after they had been taken. The rebel group was being pursued aggressively by government troops and apparently they didn't think the risk was sufficient to justify keeping the kids alive and shot them in the bush not too far off the road going to Victoria Falls. It took us a good while to find them, but we did and talked to the parents.

Q: Did this have an effect on dampening tourism?

MILLER: Not that we noticed. We maintained a travel advisory on that road. We did not think Americans should be out hitchhiking between Bulawayo and Victoria Falls. It was an area where you occasionally ran into rebel groups who were not well organized and just sort of in the last throes of trying to oppose the victorious Shona led coalition. But for the major locations in Zimbabwe we had no tourism problem. For Victoria Falls and the Zambezi and so on, the tourism business was fine.

Q: How about the British embassy? Were they influential?

MILLER: Yes, they were influential and they were excellent. The British were doing the military training for the integration of the army which was really a remarkable challenge. You had ZAPU fighters and ZANU fighters and then you had Rhodesian army regulars. You had a chap who went on to become the commanding general of the British Army on the Rhine responsible for training, which led to a number of hysterically funny conversations. But they did it. The Brits have a fine capability to train Third World military. There is a little bit of European military strategies that probably aren't completely appropriate, but that's what they were teaching. I thought they did a terrific job. I spent a lot of time working with my British colleagues. Of course, we had a contact group going over 435, African policy, so I saw a lot of them.

Q: What would you do when you'd get together with the contact group and the British ambassador? Would you sit around and wring your hands about Mugabe and try to figure out?

MILLER: No. There wasn't the perception that Mugabe was going to be able to overwhelm the whole situation. At that point, Zimbabwe was such a successful multi-layered society that I think we all thought would ultimately prosper? Bernard Chidzero, Dennis Norman, Anderson, Dan Stannard, a robust private sector and just an immense number of competent blacks emerging in the private sector. Everybody wanted to make this country work. I think our sense at that time was that at some point Robert Mugabe would step down and would be credited with having led the struggle to independence, and then having served as head of government for X number of years, and then having gratefully retired to some African-wide position. So, we were very interested in getting to know a very wide-range of leadership and influencing that leadership and working with that leadership and so on. While I eventually recommended that we terminate the AID program to Zimbabwe because of Mugabe's behavior, for most of the time, we just thought Mugabe was an excess in a system that had enough self-correcting weight that it would work.

Q: How about high-level visits while you were there?

MILLER: Frankly the most interesting high-level visit was the H.J. Heinz board. Tony O'Reilly was running H.J. Heinz and they acquired an edible oils company in Zimbabwe.

Q: You might explain H.J. Heinz.

MILLER: H.J. Heinz makes soups and edible oils - ketchups and so on. Based in Pittsburgh. It is a large publicly traded U.S. corporation. They bought a company called Oliveen, which made edible oils. Heinz was very high on Zimbabwe. I think that they had started also looking at the production of tomatoes in Zimbabwe to make tomato paste for their ketchup. So, Tony, who was chairman and CEO of Heinz at that time and had been a neighbor of mine in Pittsburgh, brought his whole board out to Zimbabwe. I thought that was the most interesting opportunity I had to show off Zimbabwe to an interesting group of people.

From the U.S. Government side, the most interesting player was probably Congressman Steve Solarz, who is a liberal Democrat but who did a fine job on a CODEL that he was on. He didn't shop. He didn't shoot animals. He didn't waste my time. Every moment we were together he was trying to learn something. He asked me what points he should make to the head of government to be of assistance to Chester Crocker and George Shultz. This was a side of Steve Solarz for which he never got enough credit.

Q: I've interviewed him.

MILLER: I like him.

Q: Everywhere he went, he was a workaholic, but a workaholic on target all the time.

MILLER: You bet.

Q: He knew his brief and he was a source. He'd go back to Congress and people would ask him and he knew and he wasn't off on a particularly ideological thing.

MILLER: I was very impressed with him. Then unlike some other visitors, when he was through with meetings, he would come back and make certain that you knew what happened. He was a most responsible visitor.

Q: You were there from when to when?

MILLER: Most of '84 and most of '85. Then I left in '86.

Q: How did you find life there?

MILLER: Just about perfect. It's a lovely place to live. The people are nice, the country is nice. It's hard to beat. Someday it will get back on its feet and it will continue to be just a wonderful place.

Q: While you were there, were there troubles with connections with neighbors in the area?

MILLER: We had a struggle going on in Mozambique between the government of Samora Machel and a group of insurgents that were notionally anti-communist, pro-Christian. We had some Americans involved in that as volunteers. Zimbabwe had a good number of Zimbabwean troops across the border supporting Machel. I occasionally got involved in going down to Maputo to work with the mission down there in terms of how they saw that struggle. Of course, we would go to South Africa on and off because we wanted to be in touch with our mission down there. There were officials in the South African government who were interested in how we saw things, so there was a fairly active dialogue down the Capetown/J'berg/Zim path and the Maputo/Zim path.

Q: What was your impression during this period about the policy of constructive engagement with Chet Crocker and all?

MILLER: It ought to be fairly obvious. I signed up for it at the outset knowing what the framework was and knowing that I was in essence working for Dr. Crocker. An ambassador at that level isn't working for the Secretary or the State or the President. You're working for your Assistant Secretary. I thought it was a fine policy because it would achieve what we wanted, which was a non-violent unwinding of apartheid in South Africa. That was a very hard proposition to sell for a number of those years because any number of critics felt that Dr. Crocker and his team, of which I was very proud to be a member, were not pushing as hard as we should and that we were somehow secret apologists for racism, which as an old civil rights veteran I found a little annoying, but you get used to that. In the end, I think Chet proved to be brilliant. I once introduced Chet by saying he was not only a great diplomat, he was a statesman. You don't find people like that. He was a statesman because he understood how the pieces had to unravel on the block. That is, to get the Boers out of their hole in the ground, which they had dug over many centuries, you had to make them feel comfortable in the sunlight. This is Punxatawny Phil coming out of his hole. If the Boers looked around and saw a lot of Cubans, they're going to go back in the hole. They're going to tell you that communism was coming to southern Africa. That was their mindset. So, for us working for Chet, there was a very useful sequence that was basically keeping the British doing the military training in Zimbabwe and keeping Robert Mugabe in a constructive stance, working with the Angolan government to say, "You've got to get the Cubans to go home. We need to unwind this mess in Cuba. There are 20,000 Cubans in Angola. Nothing's going to move down here." Then you had to work with Sam Njomo. You had to execute 435 and prove to the South Africans that the UN would act as a reasonable body to oversee this and that Sam would have a constitution that worked, which he did. Samora Machel had to begin to see the United States as a friendly country. I was once sent to talk to Pat Buchanan, an old political friend of mine, to argue for aid for Samora Machel and when I finished the meeting at the White House, Pat said, "I always knew you were a communist." So, what was constructive engagement? It was a way to work with all these players in the region to say, "Hey, apartheid is coming to an end. You have to give the African whites, the Boers, enough room that they can do this without thinking that their society is going to be overrun and they're going to be occupied by communists and the Cubans are going to arrive at their doorsteps" and that's what was achieved over a year.

Q: At one time, I was in African INR in the early '60s, and it was the conventional wisdom that, yes, South Africa would come under black rule, but it would be after a night of long knives, a slaughter of the whites or something like that. Had things changed in your thought process?

MILLER: Yes, I think so. I think there were two or three things that retrospectively turned out to be quite important. Butalesi, the leader of the Zulus, turned out to be really non-violent. For a man who led people who had a noble history of standing up for their rights physically, Butalesi never allowed that to get to be an out-of-control physical confrontation. And of course there is the remarkable Nelson Mandela. Mr. Mandela is from another planet. He is the most amazing human being I have met in my lifetime.

Q: But was he known to be that at this point?

MILLER: No. It was all back channel from guards. Word had clearly gotten out from the prison guard system that this chap was pretty unusual. So, there were high hopes for Mr. Mandela, but I doubt there was a justifiable data that would have led us to believe he was going to be as remarkable as he was.

Then you had for me during my visits down there a lot of conversations with young Nationalist Party politicians, white, who said, "Look, we all know that apartheid is going to come to an end. It is not a sustainable system. It makes no sense." Mayer, who was then quite a young man who went on to lead one of these new independent white parties, really cornered me on a couple of occasions and said, "Look, Ambassador Miller, you've got to understand: we're changing. These old guys that are running our party right now are not going to be there much longer. Our country will change." I was confident that if we could create the environment, the leadership within South Africa would figure out how to release the tension in that society without killing a lot of people. That was really our objective, to leave an economy in a society that would support a black-run majority controlled South Africa that had the best possible chance of succeeding and providing jobs for people and not going into a Kenya-like long knives Kukuyo shootout. We just didn't need that.

Q: For the researcher 50 years from now, could you explain what you meant by Punxatawny Phil?

MILLER: Punxatawny Phil is a groundhog that lives in Punxatawny, Pennsylvania. He is alleged to be able to forecast how long the winter will extend by his reaction to sunlight when he comes out of his burrow in the spring. When he comes out of his burrow, if he looks around and sees his shadow, then he feels good and spring will be coming. If he looks around and he doesn't see his shadow, then he goes back in his hole and winter will go on for another two or three months.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover in this Zimbabwe thing?

MILLER: I think Zim was a frustrating assignment. I spent probably six months back here working on something called the South Africa Working Group trying to work on policy here in the capital. I think Dr. Crocker and I pretty rapidly after 12 or 18 months reached a conclusion that I was wasting my time there. And I was.

Q: What happened in '85?

MILLER: Chet set up something called the South Africa Working Group which was headquartered back here at Main State and asked me to come back and run that. I came back. Ambassador Wisner found me some offices and we put together a little group to try to figure out how to work with those people on the Hill that were promoting economic sanctions, how to integrate our policy of constructive engagement with policies of others, all of us wanting to get to the same place but simply disagreeing on the appropriate pressures or other tools that we had available to us. I worked on that as much or more than my ambassadorial assignment.

Q: What about Senator Helms at this time, who seemed to play almost a spoiler role?

MILLER: Senator Helms and Dr. Crocker didn't like each other much. I spent some time trying to bring peace to that. I spent a lot of time trying to bring peace to things. I arranged for a meeting between Senator Helms and Dr. Crocker to review some policy issues upon which we might agree. I've never forgotteChet walked into the room and was not there more than three or four minutes before he said, "Would you mind if I smoke?" Senator Helms said, "I knew I'd find something about you that I liked." That sort of helped break the ice. Senator Helms was very difficult for Dr. Crocker because he was always maneuvering to Chet's right and probably had some support from people who in their heart were much more skeptical about the need to move South Africa toward majority rule. So, I was not involved in many of these battles in town, but I think that Dr. Crocker probably had a fairly hard time with that.

Q: Within the State Department, was the Africa Bureau on the team?

MILLER: There were sufficient people on the team that the team worked. I think that when you look at the principal deputies that Chet had, notably Frank Wisner and Princeton Lyman, people of that caliber, I think that was just critical that you had this brilliant theorist/professor/statesman in Dr. Crocker with the complete support of Secretary Shultz. But that had to be translated into the bureau and that was a skill that Chet did not have, did not have that background, and did not know as many officers. That's where Frank or Princeton or Jeff Davidow, just wonderful people that Chet drew to him as principal advisors, were very critical. And then there was his team, including the wonderful and now departed ambassador Bob Frasure, Nancy Eley, his lawyer, a terrific coterie of State Department officers who like me were taken by the elegance of the theory of how constructive engagement was going to lead to Namibian independence and withdrawal of Cubans from Angola and the stabilization in Mozambique and the end of apartheid in South Africa. It was quite a remarkable vision and Chet stuck with it for eight years. I think a lot of Foreign Service Officers thought that was really interesting.

Q: How about the Cubans?

MILLER: The Cubans played baseball, so if you have overhead photography, you always know where the Cubans are. If the Cubans could have learned how to play soccer or football, we never would have found them? a somewhat tongue-in-cheek comment.

The thing to remember, when you're looking at history retrospectively you will always tend to focus on a single tale and that tale sometimes seems so silly that you wonder why adults could have pursued it if taken out of context of all the other tales at the time. At the time, Fidel Castro was much more on a roll than he is today. He had troops or surrogates throughout Central America. He clearly had ambitions to get back to Africa, to reestablish Cuban ties to Africa. Had things gone differently, he might have succeeded. There is an argument that says he might have stayed in Angola, the 435 process might not have worked, and he might have lashed up with the Ovambo and you would have had Cubans into southwest Africa, Namibia. If South Africa had tipped into violence and the United States had stayed on the sidelines, which is where we were in some ways, and the Cuban troops or surrogates had gotten involved in South Africa, you might have had a really different outcome in terms of history. Today, that sounds as preposterous as listening to Richard Nixon in 1952. But at the time, Castro was doing fine and he had good troops and excellent medical personnel and he was reaching out to the Third World in a way that was of great relevance to them, as Nelson Mandela will tell you himself. The Cubans were doing a fine job. Nelson Mandela holds Fidel Castro in very high regard. So, if you were working for President Reagan, and you were looking at the Soviet Union moving out in a number of different countries around the world and a strategy for Reagan to engage the Soviet Union on a global basis, our assignment in Africa on that account was to get the Cubans to go home. That worked fine. That was important.

Q: After working on the South African Working Group, what did you do?

MILLER: I quit. After six years, it seemed time to go back to the private sector. I think that political appointees have a relatively short half-life in which they're valuable. They do bring a different perspective and they do bring some different ties. They also bring a fair amount of ignorance. But a realistic political appointee looks at a four-or-five year tour in which you can give back some of which has been taught to you in the first year. At some point, you're just taking up a slot that should go to a career officer. We'd talked about a third embassy for me and I said I didn't think that was appropriate? and I really didn't have the stomach for it.

Q: So what did you do?

MILLER: I came back here to Washington and put together a venture capital firm with a bunch of friends of mine, 12 investors, including General Scowcroft, which is how we get to the next public sector story. For three years, I ran a venture capital firm putting capital into an oil and gas company in Tulsa, a long haul trucking insurance company in Florida, and a startup wire ribbon cable manufacturer in Orlando. I enjoy capitalism both theoretically and practically. So that's what I did.

Q: Did you continue this? What happens later on?

MILLER: Here's what happens. I can make a three-year story into a single sentence. One of the investors was General Scowcroft. I like foreign policy. General Scowcroft had an office at 1825 I Street and so when I would finish discussing an investment opportunity with him, I would take advantage of whatever free time he had to discuss foreign policy. What a treat for a young man. I thought General Scowcroft was one of God's greatest people even before I worked for him. We like each other, I guess. I certainly liked him. To make a long story short, he was a member of the Tower Commission with the late Senator John Tower and the late Senator Edward Muskie, who reviewed the failures of the NSC that had allowed Oliver North and Co. to run amuck in what is known as the Iran-Contra Scandal. That apparently convinced him that while there are times that the NSC had to pursue activities that were a bit more active than the average foreign policy advisor liked, it was most important that whoever was in the position of implementing or overseeing these activities should be older, thoughtful, quiet, responsible, and some other adjectives that may or may not apply to me, but truthful is one I think he thought was of greatest value. So, George Herbert Walker Bush was elected President and asked General Scowcroft if he would come back and be the National Security Advisor for a second time. I get this call out of the blue that he wants to have breakfast at the Metropolitan Club. There's a story here worth telling. My secretary and General Scowcroft's secretary were trying to figure out where we could have breakfast. Our assistants could not find any place that worked. Somehow or other they decided the Metropolitan Club would be the right place. I had an inkling that Brent was going to ask me to do something, so I got to the Metropolitan Club quite early. I walked by the doorman there and I said, "Well, I'm here to have breakfast with General Scowcroft." The doorman said, "Oh, that's just wonderful. Sit right down here. I know the general will be here shortly." Sure enough, the general did arrive shortly. Then we got on the elevator, went up to the third floor, walked into this grand dining room at the Metropolitan Club, and sat down by the window. We were the only two people there. We started talking and a chap came by and poured coffee and dropped off the membership chit to sign and write down what you wanted for breakfast. Brent said, "What is your membership number?" I said, "I don't belong here." Brent, who was want to blush, turned pink to the top of his little white ears and he said, "I don't belong here either. How did we get here?" We were stuck for a few minutes and not knowing quite what to do. As fate would have it, in walked Boyden Gray who would become White House Counsel. Of course, as he walked in we waved at Boyden and said, "Quick! Come here and sign this chit." During my work at the NSC, whenever I was involved in doing something that was a little different or a little higher risk Brent and I would look at each other and say, "If we couldn't organize a breakfast for two guys at the Metropolitan Club, how do we think we're going to get any covert operations going that make any sense?" But we had breakfast. Brent just said, "Would you like to the National Security Council staff to manage counter-terrorism and narcotics and hostages and a whole raft of things?" Then Africa was added as well, frankly, because Brent was out of special assistant slots and he needed me to have assumed responsibility for both a regional and an functional position.

Q: What were the dates of this?

MILLER: I worked on the investment firm primarily in 1987 and 1988, going to the NSC in 1989.

Q: This would be '89.

MILLER: Yes. I said to General Scowcroft, "When do you want me there?" He said, "Well, the inauguration is on a Saturday. I think Monday morning would do fine." Little did I know, a day and a half off would be about as long a period of relaxation as I would have in the next two years. So I just pitched up on Monday morning.

Q: And you were doing this until when?

MILLER: All of '89 and all of '90. I left on January 1, 1991.

Q: How did you find the NSC at that time?

MILLER: Wonderful.

Q: Was this a new NSC?

MILLER: Yes. It was a new NSC because that's what President Bush wanted. It is not that the team under Reagan was poor. In our first big meeting, General Scowcroft announced to the assembled multitude, old and new staff, that the old staff would be leaving, not because President Bush was not appreciative of what they'd done, but he simply wanted his own NSC staff. So we in essence rebuilt the staff with Brent's criteria, President Bush's criteria, and with one exception in my office everybody left. I moved into Ollie's old office?room 302 in the Old Executive Office Building.

Q: Did you get Fawn?

MILLER: No, I ended up with Susan Grant. Fawn had gone. Ollie had gone, but the famous shredder was there? as was the office which Ollie had "double decked."

Q: Fawn had been a lady who was North's secretary.

MILLER: Fawn Hall. Yes, and we kept the shredder there for a number of months. When people would do tours of the Executive Office Building, they would knock on the door and say, "Could we come in and see Ollie North's shredder?" I would say, "Oh, sure." But it was a wonderful office.

Q: During this two- year period, your responsibilities sound like they were across the board. You weren't really a specialist. You were used more as a troubleshooter?

MILLER: There has always been an office there at the NSC that is responsible for more active activities than the regional or geographic offices. At the NSC you always have a number of Special Assistants and Senior Directors of the NSC, (one in the same person), who have regional accountMiddle East, Europe, Africa, etc. Then you have some functional offices. The NSC will have an office of economic affairs, and an arms control office and so. Then you have something that every three or four is renamed with some innocuous title? something meaningless enough not to draw any attention. I think we called ourselves Global Affairs. We worried about getting the hostages out of Beirut, about hostages anywhere, about the capabilities of our special mission forces and their ability to respond to crises. We probably spent more time in the first year in the creation of the counter-narcotics program in the Andes, which was a program dear to President Bush's heart, so we did the drafting of the documents for that program along with the newly appointed drug czar, William Bennett. Our office wrote the final memoranda which obtained approval for the $2 billion program to try to do something about cocaine production in Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru. I worried about Africa as well. But frankly, I spent a good deal more time worried about hostages and narcotics and so on than anything else.

Q: How did you find relations at this stage with the State Department and the Defense Department?

MILLER: Well, that's a book. I chaired something called the Coordinating Subgroup, the CSG, which is a little group that meets every week to try to appraise what might be called asymmetric threats to the United Statehostages, terrorist attacks, etc. Our principal account at the time was trying to identify who blew up the PanAm 103 flight. But that meeting had representatives every week from the CIA, from the Criminal Division of the FBI, from the State Department, the Pentagon, the Joint Staff, and from the State Department. I had a fine counterpart in the State Department who was working on terrorism. That relationship was pretty good.

Q: Who was that?

MILLER: Ambassador Busby.

Q: Tony Quainton?

MILLER: No, he had come and gone. Bremer had come and gone. After his work with us, Ambassador Busby went out to Colombia as Ambassador.

Q: Tony Gillespie?

MILLER: No. McNamara went down to Colombia. Then McNamara came in and took the job at the NSC immediately after me. So the relations with State on terrorism were pretty good. That said, the most intense involvement with State concerned the drug war. The issue was how were we going to use $2.1 billion which had been appropriated. There was an outstanding Assistant Secretary, Mel Levitsky, who was running the narcotics program at the State Department. So, we spent a great deal of time, trips back and forth to the region quite frequently, trying to figure out what in heaven's name would constitute an effective program to reduce coca cultivation in the region. That was very difficult. The interaction with the Defense Department was primarily with the Joint Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, which controlled our special mission units who would be used to preempt terrorist attacks or to respond to terrorist attacks if we did not preempt or to rescue those who lived through a terrorist attack and were hostages. So, I spent a lot of time with those units trying to get to know them and what we thought they could do. That of course tied back to the Pentagon to a wonderful man named Tom Kelly, who has passed away. Tom was the Director of Operations (J-3) for the Joint Staff. Tom was a tanker by background and Tom's impression of special mission troops was that they were sort of speed bumps on the road before any serious troops arrived. Why in God's name would you use special mission troops if you can use the Big Red One? So, it was an opportunity for me. I worked very closely with Bob Mueller, who is now running the FBI, and with the attorney general, Bob Barr. The Global Affairs Office was one of those funny little offices where the President wants to be able to go out and do things in the world and not get in trouble. In my two years, we got nobody in trouble. We got to the bottom of PanAm 103 really because of fine work by the CIA led by Fred Turco, the head of the Counter-Terrorism Office and the FBI's Director of the Criminal Division, Bill Baker. But those are the kind of accounts that keeps you awake at night. After two years, you say, "I'm tired of getting up every night and going to the Situation Room to read another cable from another screwed up place in the world."

Q: Was the example of the Achille Lauro case, the end game of that, where we ended up with Italian troops and American troops-

MILLER: If I remember correctly, I think the Americans may have surrounded and secured the aircraft and the Italians troops were around the Americans. It was hard to tell if Carl Steiner, who was in charge of those troops, was going to shoot both the Italians and the guys on the airplane or whether Carl was going to retire gracefully from the scene. Carl retired gracefully from the scene and then Abu Nidal got away. For many years, this man who had shot Mr. Klinghoffer was alive and well and that was a shame.

Q: Was this a case you took a look at and were thinking, okay, up to a certain point it was done beautifully and then at a certain point it all fell apart, and how do we avoid that sort of thing?

MILLER: Right. How do you avoid hot pursuit, which seemed quite reasonable by some standards, but ended up landing in the capital of a country that didn't understand what you're trying to do? It was recently mirrored four months ago when Spanish Marines boarded a ship going to Iraq. While it was filled with bad stuff and we got the Spanish Marines on the ship, had a successful seizure, it was then decided by the powers that be that the Marines had no jurisdiction to hold the ship and so the ship went on its way. That was a very poor operation. At the NSC in the kind of job that I had, you don't want to have that happen. You don't want Carl Steiner to get to the airport at Sigonella and then say, "Uh-oh, the Italians don't want me to be here. What am I going to do?" You don't want the Spanish Marines on a ship if they really can't do anything. People at the NSC don't go shoot people and they don't run around in the basement of the NSC and all this garbage that came out with Ollie North. However, what you must do is to determine, from the perspective of the White House, all the component pieces that are needed to execute a particular mission. If you could have rescued Terry Anderson in Beirut, one of our hostages, what would you have needed to make certain that the civilian side of the operation was all in place, that the military guys had all the authority that they needed, that there was nothing left to do but pray? That's your job.

Q: In trying to rescue or do something, there seems to be this division between the military saying, "We know how to do it. We'll go in and take it" and the civilian, particularly the State Department, side saying, "Wait a minute. If you do this, such and such will happen." It ends up by the State Department people looking like wimps but sometimes they may not be as action oriented as they should be.

MILLER: That's what the NSC does every day. You sit there with an audience that ranges from wimps to killers. You sort of say, "Somewhere in this audience is the truth. Here are the positions." Your observations are correct. I think State is fully justified in saying that somebody has to represent the perspective of engagement with countries that goes beyond the particular incident that you're looking at. Just because you can go to country X and execute a mission and extract an American or extract a terrorist, an extraterritorial rendition if you will, is that prudent? Is that good for our relations with Greece, for example? So, State in its role is very typically saying, "Think about the greater consequences of the mission." Then you have the intelligence community that is forever being criticized for not having enough intelligence. Well, the concept of enough intelligence ought to be expressed mathematically. There is never enough intelligence. There is always a function in the equation that says you can have more intelligence up to where your local station chief is sitting next to the hostage with his arm around him giving him coffee when he's rescued. But that's the problem with the intelligence community. How much intelligence do you have? What do you have to do to get more intelligence? At what point does the risk of getting more intelligence outweigh the value of trying to pursue it? Then you get to the military community that very frequently will look at the State Department and say, "What a group of wimps" and they'll look at the Agency and say, "They never got the right intelligence because they're not military guys. So we're going to have to go get that intelligence ourselves." That entails a whole additional set of risks and a whole additional set of national oversight provisions for the special mission troops if they want to go look at a target. So, the NSC's position is to maintain a thoughtful balance of interest among those communities, among those three teams to try to protect American lives and extract Americans where they are held hostage and to arrest those people around the world that we believe should be arrested. That's what that job is about.

Q: Did you get involved in the Panama business? Was that on your agenda?

MILLER: Yes.

Q: How did you feel about that?

MILLER: It was a very expensive arrest. Noriega was a bad guy. There were terrible things going on in Panama in terms of the drug trade. It finally got pushed over the edge when some Panamanian troops beat up an official American walking across one of the bridges and we finally decided that was just too much. The invasion, Operation Just Cause, went well beyond the scope of what I would have been concerned about. I am a great admirer of General Max Thurman, who ran Just Cause. Max Thurman has now passed away. We had a hostage there who was successfully rescued in the middle of it, an American national who had probably been a CIA employee. Our special mission guys got in and got him out of the prison without being hurt. But we did lose six SEALS the night of the invasion that were improperly deployed on an open runway. They were all killed.

Q: After your 2 years dealing with the drug problem, where did you come out?

MILLER: There is a lot of money in the drug trade. It's a huge business. The drug problem is an odd situation. It is a law enforcement and a societal problem but it is of such scope that we thought it was necessary to get the uniformed services into the equation to provide some kind of fairly massive backup to DEA and to the Coast Guard and people like that. I think I came down on a position that I've held fairly steady for many years and that is that it is a multifaceted problem. The drug trade is obviously driven by demand in the United States. If there were no demand, the campesinos would happily be growing soybeans or a lower margin crop. I frankly do not understand where the demand comes from in the United States. I have spent a lot of time at boarding schools and colleges and with Wall Street brokers and so on asking the question of why people use cocaine and other drugs. We consume a lot of cocaine in the United States. It's a mystery to me and it will remain a mystery to me until I pass away, but that's half the equation.

But the other half of the equation is the fact that there is a very well organized, very large criminal cartel that makes certain that that drugs are available on the streets at a reasonable price to any American who wants them. That's not a good thing. It fuels the demand problem. When we looked at in Colombia, we saw in essence a sovereign entity tipping completely into the hands of the drug cartels. You would have a passport issuing sovereign entity basically run by an international cocaine syndicate. That we did not want to have happen. So we set off to pursue a ton of different strategies with crop substitution and crop eradication and interdiction of high value assets in the drug trade which include chemists and pilots and labs. It almost never involves campesinos, the poor little fellow who's trying to support his family with a high value cash crop. I have flown over the Upper Huaga Valley in Peru many times and have looked at coca bushes as far as the eye can see. They're all poor little Peruvians who are trying to figure out how to pay for their families. Part of the issue is to offer people a better economic future in Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia, and other places where they can grow high value coca. The other part of the answer is eventually to solve the drug addiction problem in the United States. Drug addiction seems to come in waves and we need to simply fight that wave when it's here. When people discuss legalization, I think of my civil rights days. Quite frankly, I've talked to Charlie Rangle about it. If you think that the best answer for young black Americans is to be addicted to legal cocaine when they're 15 and to live on cocaine until they die from the effects of some drug, that's fine. I just don't share that vision of our country. I have a problem with that. I can't believe that the best answer our country has for drug addiction is legalization. If you want to be a hop-head, have all your synapsis scrambled, that's cool." But I know there's an economic argument that says, "This is a terrible mess. There is just too much money involved to fight it." It is a terrible mess. The reason it's a terrible mess is that there is no easy answer. I don't think an underclass in this country ought to be left on a maintenance dosage of methadone for their whole life. So, I don't have any particularly good answer other than it's a giant law enforcement effort. So that leaves the military on occasion saying, "What are we doing in this?" It leaves DEA guys saying, "This is our base business. We go out and we get bad guys. We try to close them down." It leaves the CIA in the never-never land of, "We have an asset. We'd rather exploit the asset," DEA saying, "We'd rather arrest the asset and put him in prison." It was the usual tug of war.

Q: In 1990, you gave up on that.

MILLER: Well, I was going broke. I had three kids in college and Brent was proud to pay me $72,000 a year. That didn't cover the tuition bills. Good bless Mollie, she had gone to work at the American Bar Association and it was her salary that kept the wolf from the door for two years. So, at the end of two years, I just came back to making money and have been doing so ever since.

Q: Great. We'll leave it at that having solved the drug problem.

MILLER: It was a lot of fun.

Q: Thank you very much, David.

MILLER: Thank you. It's been a treat.

End of interview